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Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 21 November 2013

Jeudi 21 novembre 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 21 November 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 21 novembre 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Orders of the day.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Good morning, Speaker and all members of the House. On the day before the 50th anniversary of the shooting of President Kennedy, the government is pleased to call government order G117.

ENHANCING PATIENT CARE AND PHARMACY SAFETY (STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT) ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT DES LOIS AFIN D'AMÉLIORER LES SOINS AUX MALADES ET LA SÉCURITÉ DES PHARMACIES

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 22, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 117, An Act to amend certain statutes with respect to the regulation of pharmacies and other matters concerning regulated health professions / *Projet de loi 117, Loi visant à modifier certaines lois en ce qui concerne la réglementation des pharmacies et d'autres questions relatives aux professions de la santé réglementées.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate? The member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure I see the connection between the assassination of President Kennedy and what I'm about to talk about, but I will talk about Bill 117, Enhancing Patient Care and Pharmacy Safety.

Why are we here, Speaker? Well, we're here for a very sad reason. We're here because, between February 2012 and March 20 of this year, 2013, 1,202 Ontarians received diluted chemo drugs. Of those, 1,162 were adults and 40 of them were children.

The events that led to the diluted chemo drug have been studied by Dr. Thiessen, a very well-known teacher of pharmacy that I would say has taught a great many of the pharmacists who presently work in our province. He is respected by all and was asked by the government to look at the supply chain of the drugs.

At the same time, the social policy committee of this Legislature was tasked to look at what happened, what

went wrong. How could this be, in this day and age, that from 2012 to 2013, 1,202 people received diluted chemo drugs?

I'm a little bit surprised that the minister would choose to put forward Bill 117 now, because the social policy committee is just about to finish their work and their recommendations. Unfortunately, I'm not allowed to share those. It will be up to the committee to share them, but I think it would have been wiser to wait not only for Dr. Thiessen, who looked at the supply chain of chemotherapy drugs—they're called admixtures, because they're the sort of chemotherapy you get through an IV bag—but the minister had also agreed and the House had also agreed that the social policy committee should look at what happened, and we did.

So without sharing any secrets of the gods about what the committee has been doing while we are putting the finishing touches on our report, I can share with you some of what is already in Hansard. I can make reference to some of the comments that Dr. Thiessen made while he was at committee in an exchange that he and I had the pleasure to have.

So Dr. Thiessen had finished his report. A couple of weeks later, the government made the report public, and then we invited Dr. Thiessen to come to social policy, the committee that was charged with looking at the diluted chemo drugs, and he came and told us all of the good work that he had done and all of the findings within the limited scope of his mandate, which was to look at the supply chain.

When I started to ask him questions a little bit outside of his mandate—Dr. Thiessen is a wealth of resources. He is very knowledgeable about anything that has to do with pharmacy in our province. So I started to ask him questions as to, "You know, Dr. Thiessen, the mistake happened when a group purchasing organization"—most people don't know what those are, and, frankly, I was not too familiar with them either before I started this work. It is basically a purchasing agent, somebody who puts out tenders for the sort of supplies that you buy in a hospital.

The theory behind it is pretty good. If everybody buys their bandages in bulk, every hospital will be able to have economies of scale and pay less. So everybody gets this. You can buy a pack of four rolls of toilet paper or you can buy a truckload of it, and you'll probably have a better price if you buy the Costco size than if you buy the little family pack. So that's what hospitals have been doing. Hospitals have been doing it as a way to save money in everything that they purchase.

Then came those group purchasing organizations. Group purchasing organizations basically are—the hos-

pital asks those group purchasing organizations to get them as good a deal as possible on a number of items. So different hospitals look at what they need to buy, so, “We need to buy crutches, and we need to buy four-by-four for dressing wounds. We need to buy sheets”—everything that a hospital needs. A hospital uses a lot of stuff.

Different groups of them get together. They contract out to the group purchasing organization, and the group purchasing organization arranges the tender. So they put a tender out: “We need so many truckload of bandages, and so many truckloads of crutches, and what is the best price we can get?” Then the hospital ends up paying less than if they had done that purchasing themselves.

In theory, the whole thing looks pretty good. We all win: If hospitals spend less money buying bandages, then they can use that money providing care. So, in theory, everything goes fine. Except that as we started to peel the onion, I would say, of why 1,202 people received diluted chemo drugs for a period of close to 15 months, we realized that the error lay with that organization.

That organization was asked to go out to tender for admixtures for chemo drugs, which they did. They put a team of 11 pharmacists together who reviewed the tender. The tender went out, and three different companies submitted bids. Of the three different companies that submitted bids, Marchese Hospital Solutions—we’ll call them “Marchese” for now—was the bid that was selected. What had happened, though, is that what the hospital wanted was chemo drugs that were concentration-specific—in the hospital world, in the pharmacy world, this is pretty basic knowledge.

0910

I’ll try to make it easy to understand. When you get this little bag of IV drugs that they attach to a pole and then attach to your arm or other part of your body to give it to you, the little pouch either has a set amount of medication in the little pouch—so as long as you get the whole little pouch, you know that you get the right amount of medication—or the little pouch is concentration-specific. Let’s say we know that we have four grams of that medication in a 100-millilitre bag. That means that, depending on your body size, if you don’t need the whole bag, we know exactly that if we use half of the bag, we will have given you two grams of it. If you’re a medium-sized person and need three grams of medication, we will give you three quarters of the bag, and you get the medication. So you get the idea that, if you’re not using the whole bag, you have to make sure that the medication is concentration-specific so that you know how much medication you are actually taking out of the bag and how much medication is left in the bag. Sometimes you throw it out; sometimes you can use it for somebody else.

Of those 11 people who sat down, none of them picked up on the fact that the hospitals all needed those chemotherapy drugs to be concentration-specific. This is where the mistake happened.

From then on, we will follow, like Dr. Thiessen did, a chain of events where nobody picked up on the mistake

that was made by a group called Medbuy, which is the group purchasing organization that handled the tender. So the tender goes out for medication—that is, chemotherapy medication—without saying that it has to be concentration-specific. Now, anybody who deals in oncology and knows those drugs would have caught it right away that those drugs need to be concentration-specific, because they have to be adjusted exactly to the body size of the person—as I said, 40 of them were children. They come in all sorts of shapes and sizes, and those medications need to be adjusted exactly to your body weight.

None of the 11 pharmacists at Medbuy had oncology—oncologists are the people who specialize in treating cancer; they are the people who deal with chemotherapy drugs—so none of them picked it up. The hospital was clear as to what they wanted to buy. They wanted to buy chemotherapy drugs that were concentration-specific, but the GPO, the group purchasing organization, called Medbuy, which handled the tender, put out for tender a drug that was not concentration-specific.

The tender is won by Marchese. Marchese looks at this and prepares exactly what the tender asked them to prepare. They prepare a concentration that has four milligrams in a bag, but they don’t prepare it concentration-specific, because that’s not what the tender told them to do. Then Medbuy ships it, first to London Health Sciences, then Windsor, then Lakeridge, then Peterborough hospital.

It was not till it got to Peterborough hospital’s cancer treatment centre that a very timid, but I would say diligent, pharmacy technician picked up on the fact that the bag he had in front of him was not concentration-specific. The task he had to do that day was prepare medication for a client—we ended up finding out it was a woman—of a certain size body. In order to do this, he needed this bag to be concentration-specific, and it was not. Then the whole thing unravelled. We owe this very timid and diligent pharmacy technician in Peterborough a great deal of respect for what he has done. Then they brought it up the chain of command, and we were able to trace it back.

So here we are today, November 21, 2013, talking about a bill, Bill 117, that the minister put forward to sort of reassure Ontarians that what happened will never happen again. But there is nothing in this bill that talks about group purchasing organizations. The bill in itself is pretty sound. What we’re trying to do by legislating a change in the oversight of hospital pharmacies and giving some regulatory colleges more power—I’m not opposed to any of this; all of that work should have been done. But it has very little to do with making sure that what those 1,202 Ontarians went through never happens again, because you see, Mr. Speaker, what happened is a mistake that happened at the group purchasing organization.

Back to my conversations with Dr. Thiessen: When Dr. Thiessen came, I told him, “You see the value of oversight,” because one of his recommendations was that we add a layer of oversight to hospital pharmacies, and this is what Bill 117 does. It does other things, but when

it comes to drugs, that's what it does. Dr. Thiessen agrees that oversight has value. Oversight brings quality into the health care system.

He recommended that an area of the supply chain of the drugs already has quite a bit of oversight—every single hospital in this province is accredited, and when the accreditation team comes to the hospital, they review everything that goes on in that hospital, including everything that goes on in their pharmacy department. So we have an environment that already has oversight, and Dr. Thiessen recommended that we add a supplementary level of oversight where the College of Pharmacists, which is one of the regulatory colleges in Ontario, which presently inspects retail pharmacies, would also inspect hospital pharmacies.

There's nothing wrong with that. It is a step that many other provinces do: British Columbia, Alberta and a few more do this. They have the accreditations of their hospital pharmacy, and they also have their colleges that oversee the same pharmacy. Two levels of oversight just makes things safer. There's no harm in doing this as long as you don't spend too many resources in the process, but that's for another talk. That's what the bill does.

But the bill does not address where the mistake happened. By adding a level of oversight in a hospital, are we doing something good? Yes, and I can tell you that New Democrats will be supporting Bill 117. But what we fail to do is, we fail to assure people that what happened from February 2012 to March 2013, where 1,202 Ontarians received diluted chemo drugs, never happens again.

How do you make sure it never happens again? Well, you have to pay attention to where the mistake took place, and the mistake didn't take place in the hospital. It didn't take place at Marchese Hospital Solutions. It didn't take place at the cancer treatment centre, although any one of them could have caught it. The mistake took place with the group purchasing organization. The mistake took place with Medbuy.

0920

Yet there is nothing in this bill that affects Medbuy. There is nothing in this bill that brings oversight of those group purchasing organizations. There is nothing in this bill that will guarantee Ontarians that the mistake that happened does not get repeated in years to come. This is why I started my remarks by saying I would have much preferred that the minister wait until the committee of this Legislature tables its report and its recommendations. Although I cannot tell you what the recommendations are, because the report has not been tabled, I can guarantee you that our recommendations will have to do with making sure that what happened never happens again.

Other things that you will find in Hansard: We spent quite a bit of time questioning Medbuy, the group purchasing organization. I can tell you that the funding for the group purchasing organization is very strange. I hope people will be able to follow this. You know when you ask somebody to purchase something for you—for example, you go to a travel agent. So you go to a travel agent, they purchase a trip for you and you pay them for

your services; or you have a contractor, and you pay them for their services.

For Medbuy, the hospital doesn't pay for those services. What happens with group purchasing organizations is that the group purchasing organization organizes the tender and says, "We need that many of these medications, we need those bandages, we need those crutches, we need those lifts and we need all of this," and the different bidders put in their bids. Then they put in what they call a discount but what I will call a kickback, because that's what a kickback is. The group purchasing organization settles on the price and says, "From now on, this group of hospitals, you purchase your crutches and your bandages from Marchese Hospital Solutions. They are the one with the best price," and most of the time they are able to bring those prices back—

Hon. John Gerretsen: Rosario Marchese? Is that Rosario's company?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The Attorney General is heckling that Marchese is also the last name of one of my colleagues. They share a last name, but they don't share anything else. He knows nothing about pharmacy, and they know nothing about MPP Marchese. So I hope we'll put that one to bed.

The group purchasing organization, Medbuy, says, "From now on, you're going to purchase these drugs from Marchese at that price." Every time the hospital puts in an order, Marchese ships the drugs to the hospital and the hospital pays Marchese, and at the same time Marchese gives a 5% kickback to the group purchasing organization, to Medbuy. The hospital never really pays Medbuy; it is whenever they make a purchase directly.

Why is this of significance? Well, for a number of reasons. First of all, we all know where those dollars come from. Those are taxpayers' dollars we're talking about. The hospital is funded by the taxpayer, it purchases drugs from Marchese using taxpayers' dollars and Marchese pays back to the group purchasing organization, to Medbuy, their 5% kickback. But because the transaction takes place between Marchese and the group purchasing organization and the hospital does not pay them directly, it changes everything.

The first thing it changes is that Medbuy is not subject to the sunshine list. I have their organizational chart in front of me right now. They have a president and CEO; last year, for reasons unknown, they had two of them. They have a VP of strategic sourcing and member services. They have a VP of pharmacy clinical services and business development. They have a VP of finance. They have a chief financial officer—all with support staff. They have a chief information officer. They have decision support. They have a manager and coordinators of human resources. They have strategic sourcing and member service pharmacy, with one director, two managers and two coordinators.

They have a business development and communications department with one director, one manager and one coordinator. They have a physician adviser. They have a clinical service director and two managers. They

have strategic sourcing operations, with five managers and five operators. They have consumer support and implementation, with have one director, one manager and three coordinators. The list goes on and on. I am not allowed to share with you how much those people made, but they shared that with us. Let me tell you that if the sunshine list was to apply to this group, a whole lot of the positions that I have just rhymed off would be on this list.

Let me tell you that hospitals presently have purchasing departments. I have spent quite a bit of time looking at hospital budgets. There is not one director of purchasing in all 150 hospitals in Ontario that makes half of the salary that the president and CEO of Medbuy is making. There is not one director of purchasing in all of the hospitals in Ontario that makes a salary that resembles the VP's salary. I wish I could share those numbers with you, but we would have to agree with their lawyers, which we haven't been able to do.

But the point that I'm making is that this contractual arrangement does not support transparency. It does not support clarity. This is where the mistake happened. Not only does it not support transparency; it is also unaccountable.

Remember how we talked about oversight and how important oversight is, and this is what Bill 117 is all about: adding a layer of oversight to hospitals? Well, this group purchasing organization has no oversight whatsoever, no transparency whatsoever. It makes sure that it doesn't get paid by the hospital so that it is not subject to the sunshine list. It is not subject to any accountabilities to the public, which is sort of weird.

So when Dr. Thiessen was in front of the committee—Dr. Thiessen is the good doctor who did the supply chain investigation about the diluted chemo drugs became known. When I questioned him and said, “I can see that you value oversight, because you've added a layer of oversight to hospital pharmacies, which already have some,” he agreed with that. But then I said, “Why is it that another organization that has no oversight whatsoever, that is responsible for having made the mistake that led to the diluted chemo drugs—you don't make any recommendations regarding them?” He agreed that he should have, and he agreed that some level of oversight to those group purchasing organizations would improve quality and would put us on a path to make sure that what happened with the diluted chemo drugs never happens again.

But we're not talking about any of this this morning, Mr. Speaker, because the minister decided to go ahead with Bill 117 before we had even started to write our final report. We were still hearing from witnesses when she put out Bill 117.

0930

Myself, my entire caucus and, I would say, every member in this Legislature don't want this error to ever happen again. Going through chemotherapy is no picnic. For most people, it means mega sickness. It means mega side effects. But people agree to go through some of those brutal treatments because they're hoping for a cure.

They're hoping to get better. They're trusting that although, in the short term, chemotherapy makes them feel pretty sick, with horrifying side effects, they will agree with and trust their oncology team and take those drugs, because they want to get better; they want to get healthy again.

Then when you look back and see, “I went through that brutal treatment, I lived through all of those side effects, and I was not receiving the right dosage of chemotherapy,” it's not an easy thing to live through. It hasn't been easy for those people.

I can tell you that what happened, the dilution, will be studied extensively by Cancer Care Ontario and others to see if it really had an effect. But so far, nobody is able to answer that question. We hope that it did not have a negative effect, but we cannot tell those 1,202 people for sure, “Oh, don't worry. It didn't affect you.” Nobody can say that, because we don't know, because a doctor had selected a precise dosage of a drug and you got less than that. You got diluted drugs.

So here we are with Bill 117, which does not address the fundamental mistake that happened, which is too bad. I look forward to the day—soon, I'm hoping; within the next few weeks—when our final report will be tabled, and you will see some of the recommendations that have been made, specifically aimed at making sure that it never happens again. But for now, we will be talking about Enhancing Patient Care and Pharmacy Safety, Bill 117, which talks about a new layer of oversight in hospital pharmacies.

I've said, and I will continue to say, that it's a good thing. New Democrats have—nothing wrong with putting a new layer of oversight in our hospital pharmacies. I think this is something that most hospitals agree with. This is something that other jurisdictions have put in place, and it has served people well.

The bill in itself will need a little bit of a look into, just to make sure that we get it right. It is quite a big change for the College of Pharmacists, which, up to now, has been supervising all of their members. No matter where the pharmacist works, whether he or she works in retail or in hospital, they are a member of the college, and the college always protects us, the people of Ontario, from wrongdoing of their members. That was always there, and that will continue to be there. If you are a pharmacist practising in Ontario, you are a member of the College of Pharmacists, and you fall under their oversight. The college is there to protect the public if one of their members was to stray. This has always been there; this will continue to be there.

The new power that the bill would give to the College of Pharmacists has to do with the right to credit, to look over, to oversee a pharmacy department within a hospital. Right now, the college does this for the thousands of pharmacies, mainly retail pharmacies, that we have throughout Ontario. Whether you go to Rexall or Shoppers Drug Mart or your independent pharmacy down the street, or a pharmacy at Costco or Walmart or at your grocery store, it doesn't matter: The College of

Pharmacists has inspected them, they have oversight of them, and they meet the requirements for retail pharmacy. Now the college will not only continue to look after all of those retail pharmacies no matter where they are; they will also oversee pharmacies within hospitals.

There are a few problems when you do this. The first thing is that a hospital pharmacy and a retail pharmacy do not have the same amount of risk at the same place. You can easily see that in a retail pharmacy, nobody buys the amount of drugs that a hospital pharmacy purchases. It doesn't matter how big a bottle of Aspirin or Tylenol you buy; you will never come close to the size of the bottle that a hospital pharmacy buys. They are way bigger.

So the criteria, the regulations that we have in place right now for the college of pharmacy to oversee retail pharmacy, are not easily transferable to the hospital pharmacy. Hospital pharmacies have never done that before, have never had that level of oversight. They have had accreditation hospital-wide, but they've never had the college of pharmacy, so nobody really knows what this is going to be like.

Something that I would like to make sure is in the bill is that what we call the provisions of the Drug and Pharmacies Regulation Act—they're called DPRA. Basically, there are certain provisions within the Drug and Pharmacies Regulation Act—we will call them the regulations—that make no sense in a hospital environment, and other areas of risk within the hospital that are not covered at all within this act. What we want is to make sure that this transition is done in a way that improves patient care. There is no point in applying a set of regulations to our hospital pharmacy just to discover that all of our hospital pharmacies fail, none of them meet the requirements, simply because the requirements makes no sense in their environment, because the regulations were done for retail pharmacies; they were not done for hospital pharmacies. That's the first thing that I will be looking for in the bill, to make sure that this process as to how we change the Drug and Pharmacies Regulation Act—that the changes to that act are done in a way that makes sense for hospitals. Ontario has never done that before. The bill is not silent, but not very explicit on that. That's one of the first things that I will be looking for clarification on when the bill goes to second reading, and as I've already mentioned, we, the New Democrat caucus, will support this bill going to second reading.

The second thing that needs to be taken into account and that is not really explicit in the bill—the bill talks about it a bit, but not explicitly—is the timeline for the coming into force of the provisions of the bill. The bill does say that it will be a scattered timeline, but we have no idea as to what is the scope of this. I can tell you that for some smaller hospitals with significant budget constraints, depending on what the regulations end up being, they could have a very tough time meeting those regulations on a small deadline. Not that they shouldn't; we all agree that if it's going to improve patient care and patient safety, it should be done, but it's really, "What

will those regulations be?" And if it means changing the actual set-up and construction and everything else within our hospitals, none of that comes cheap; none of that comes fast. The last thing I want is a whole bunch of hospitals to fail those new accreditation standards because we haven't given them time to adjust.

You have to remember, Mr. Speaker, that they were not the cause of this problem. Hospital pharmacies have not failed us; they have not made mistakes. The mistake was made at the group purchasing organization, at Medbuy. They were not made in our hospital pharmacy. So I certainly do not want to set up a process that is going to punish them.

0940

Although the bill talks about an appropriate timeline, I will be seeking clarifications to make sure that, for some hospitals, these timelines could be several years before they can save enough money to make the structural changes to their pharmacy environment to make regulations that we think would be applied to them, but we still don't know. Those are my two major concerns with the first part of Bill 117, that is, Enhancing Patient Care and Pharmacy Safety.

The second part of the bill has absolutely nothing to do with anything. Frankly, that's the only way I could describe it. It got added on to Bill 117 because it's something that needed to be done for a long time. It's something that has to do with patient safety, I guess, but has nothing to do with the diluted chemo drugs or anything like that. It's like you tack on a whole bunch of stuff at the end. It's a good thing; we will support it. But forget everything I've told you about diluted chemo drugs; we're now into a new chapter that talks about colleges.

In Ontario right now, we have 27 either full colleges or transitional colleges that regulate health care professionals. So if you are a nurse, a physician, a physiotherapist, an occupational therapist, an audiologist, a midwife, a chiropractor, a dentist, an optometrist—they're already covered—an oculist, a Chinese medicine practitioner, an acupuncturist or a social worker—there are 27 of us. In order to provide care in Ontario, in order to work in Ontario, you need to belong to a college. The college is there for one reason: to protect the public.

We understand that there's always a possibility of risk. If you were to deal with somebody who was incompetent, how will you know until maybe it is too late? So to make sure that everybody who calls themselves dentists or chiropractors or nurse practitioners or anything else, to make sure that those people are competent, we have 27 colleges. Those colleges are given their power through the government, through an act—through a bill, through a law. We need to make changes to that bill so that the colleges can protect us even better.

It has nothing to do with the diluted chemo drugs. The diluted chemo drugs had nothing to do with the power of the colleges or anything like this, but it is something that colleges have been asking for for a long time, and the minister decided to tack this on. It's sort of weird, but I have no problem with it. I will support it. They are things that have been needed to be done for a long time.

So what are some of them? The first one is that the bill will enhance the mandatory reporting from hospitals to colleges. A lot of health care professionals work within our hospital sector. If you go into any hospital at any time of day or night, you will see a large array of different health care providers from pharmacists to lab technicians to physio to occupational therapists to physicians to nurses to respiratory therapists. There are many, many who work within our hospitals.

But the way that it is right now, if a hospital realizes that they have a problem with one of their health professionals—take a physician that has privileges in a hospital. So the hospital realizes that one physician is having a problem maintaining his competence, is having problems that have an impact on patient care: The hospital has a duty to report that to the college. They're supposed to talk to the College of Physicians and Surgeons, which is the specific college that looks after physicians, and tell them, "Physician such-and-such is being investigated right now. We have doubts as to his or her competence. We have doubts as to the quality of care that he or she is able to dispense."

The law is written in a way that is very, very restrictive. The law is written so that the duty to report hospital privilege changes rests with the person who imposes the change. It looks like that's pretty clear. It is pretty clear, except that it is never a person who does the change; most of the time, it is the board of directors of the hospital that will end up being the one signing off on the changes of privilege. A physician won't have privileges, or he or she will have limited privileges, or there's a change of privilege based on a patient's quality of care and physician competence. But because this decision is made by a board, not by a person, hospitals don't report those. Yet the same physician could have privileges in a number of other hospitals, especially in an urban area, and continue to practise, although his or her college has no idea that one particular hospital has had to take measures to limit or suspend their privileges or expel the physician altogether. It's funny how one word makes the system fall apart.

In that particular bill, when we—we; I wasn't there at the time—when the good people in this Legislative Assembly drafted that bill, they put the responsibility on the person who imposes the change, but the practice in our hospitals right now is that it's not a person; it's a board. Therefore, nobody does it. This doesn't protect the public.

Remember: Colleges are there for one reason: The colleges are there to protect the public. But now we have a loophole. We have identified an area where the public may need to be protected. The hospital has acted upon it and tried to protect the public, but that information was never shared with the college. That's in the bill, that will get changed, and I think that's a good thing.

The next thing that the bill will do is that it will enable the college to share information back with the hospital. Right now, the college might have received a complaint against one of its members. They do an investigation.

They find that this particular member has a problem, and they may restrict their licence. They may take it away. They may take disciplinary procedures. But the law is written in such a narrow way that they are not allowed to share that information back with the hospital or with the employer. I don't think it serves the patients well. Remember: The colleges are there to protect each and every one of us. When the bill was first written, it was written in a way that we put the bar for the college to be allowed to connect back to the hospital so, so high that it very seldom met the threshold. All we want right now is, if your college has disciplined you—as in, a health professional under the 27 colleges has been disciplined—then the college will be allowed to share that information with the hospital sooner. I think this is a step that will help protect patient care and will help to protect Ontarians. This is certainly a step that I and the New Democrats are willing to support.

The next one again has to do with sharing information. When the bill was first written to direct how the different health colleges were to do their work, here again the threshold to be able to share information was extremely high.

0950

Probably for the first time ever in your life, you will remember that the College of Physicians and Surgeons had done a follow-up on a complaint on one of their members from the Ottawa region who was not conducting colonoscopies in a way that was appropriate. Basically, they were not going far enough into the colon to be able to put the diagnosis forward that they were putting forward, that either they were or were not at risk for cancer. That was a risk to public health. There were also problems, also in the Ottawa area, with the sterilization of the equipment that was used by this particular physician.

That information finally met the threshold for the college to be able to share information with public health agencies. But before this, although sometimes they were able to identify a threat to public health when they did investigations of complaints of their own members, or when they did investigations of their members, they were never allowed to share that information. So although the physician or the nurse or whoever got disciplined for having failed public safety, for having failed in their duties, the college was set up in such a way that the duty to protect the personal information of the physician or the other health professional overrode the duty to protect members of the public.

This also needed to be changed. This has been included in the bill—and this has nothing to do with the diluted chemo drugs. But it's in the bill, and I'm here today to talk about the bill, so I'm telling you what's in it and what it will do.

The fourth piece that is in the bill has to do with greater discretion on the part of the college to investigate a complaint. As the law is written right now, if a complaint comes to one of the colleges, the college has no choice but to follow up on that complaint. In theory, I

guess when the good people in this House first wrote it up, they wrote it up with the view that, "We really want to protect the public, so no matter how trivial, you should do a follow-up, you should investigate and you should make sure that you protect the public." So what started out as a goodwill intention on the part of the people who drafted the bill way back then is now being used for personal gain. Sometimes, a dispute between—and I can give you an example of a dispute between two physicians. They work in the same practice, and one is late paying his share of the rent. The other physician is kind of ticked off and says, "I've had enough of this," so they phone the college.

Explain to me, Speaker, how a dispute over rent is putting patients at risk. It has nothing to do with providing good patient care. Both of those physicians may be excellent at quality patient care, but one phones the college against the other, and the college has no choice but to put that particular physician under investigation.

An investigation is something that is public. It's something that can be viewed by you and me and everybody else, but it has no merit. The college is there to protect the public. It is not there to side with one or the other because one has not paid his share of the rent. There have been numerous complaints like that. I can give you another example: A patient goes in to see his family physician—it happens to be a "he." The family physician is quite busy that afternoon. The appointment is 30 minutes late. When he comes back out, there's a parking ticket on his car. The patient is quite upset with this. He goes back into the doctor's office, gives the secretary hell for having a parking ticket and tells them, "You have to pay my ticket because you're the one who was late, and that's why I have a parking ticket." The physician says, "I don't know why I should pay your ticket. You could have gone back out and put more money in the meter," whatever. I wasn't privy to the conversation. But what I do know is that if you go on the College of Physicians and Surgeons website, you will see that that particular physician had a complaint against him. This complaint has nothing to do with the quality of care that that physician provided.

It gets even uglier when you look at a divorce and custody battle. When you go through a divorce or custody battle, especially the ones that are very acrimonious, the fact that the college has to investigate every single complaint is used as a way to basically make trouble for the other. The college was never set up for that. It was not set up to take part as to who should have custody of the kids on what weekend or anything of the sort. The college is there to protect the public if one of their members has failures; the fact that you get separated or divorced has nothing to do with protecting the public. None of the people receiving the care from those health care professionals are complaining. It is their spouse who wants to put a mark on the professional's record just to spite them, just to escalate the fight between two ex-spouses who don't get along anymore.

I could give you other examples. Some of them are completely frivolous. Two physicians live side by side—

I shouldn't always pick on physicians. There are 27 others, but this happens to be a physician. They live side by side, and Dr. A complains to Dr. B that their fence is poorly maintained, and that looks bad in their yard. "It was your fence. You're the one who put it up. You're the one who should maintain it." The other physician says, "I'll maintain my fence the way I see fit," and then one of them calls the college.

Do you see where I'm going with this, Mr. Speaker? This has nothing to do with protection of the public. But those are the kinds of complaints—because the law right now mandates the college to investigate every single complaint, those complaints have to be handled as if they were as serious as a sexual assault by a health care provider to a client, as seriously as if they were a complete breach of trust between a care provider and their client.

All of those changes to the law are also contained in Bill 117. They're all good. They're all going in the right direction. I may do a little tweaking of some of the language, especially when it comes to "prescribed purpose." I always hate when they bring new terminology that has not been defined, because then it will get defined by different people in different circumstances in different ways. So I will probably try to bring clarity to "prescribed purpose" just so that we don't end up with a lot of people spending a lot of money in court, saying, "Well, the prescribed purpose was this, but it was that." There's one term in there that I don't like. I will be bringing changes. The rest of those are all good things—good things that the Minister of Health could have brought at any time. She linked that up to the diluted chemo drug when, really, there was no link to it, but it will get done. I guess that's all that matters.

Ça me fait extrêmement plaisir ce matin de vous parler du projet de loi 117. Le projet de loi 117 a été mis de l'avant par la ministre de la Santé suite à un grave problème qui s'est passé dans notre système de traitement du cancer : 1 202 personnes en Ontario—1 172 adultes et 40 enfants—ont reçu la chimiothérapie diluée. C'est quelque chose qui ne s'était jamais produit en Ontario et que j'espère ne se reproduira jamais. Les 1 202 familles qui ont été touchées par cette erreur-là ont vécu des moments très difficiles.

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La ministre de la Santé a mis de l'avant le projet de loi 117 dans l'espoir de rassurer les gens qu'on avait appris de nos erreurs et que ces erreurs-là ne seraient jamais refaites. Je suis bien d'accord qu'on doit apprendre de nos erreurs et qu'on ne doit pas les répéter, mais le projet de loi 117 touche à la supervision des pharmacies à même les hôpitaux. Ce n'est pas là que l'erreur a été faite; l'erreur a été faite lorsqu'on a demandé à une tierce partie, une compagnie indépendante qui s'appelle Medbuy, d'acheter les produits de chimiothérapie en gros à un prix réduit.

L'idée était bonne : si on était capable d'avoir le même produit à un meilleur prix, ça serait mieux pour le système de la santé. Malheureusement, lorsque Medbuy a fait l'appel d'offres, ils ont mal identifié le produit qu'on

voulait. Ils n'ont pas dit que le produit avait besoin d'être dans une concentration spécifique. Donc, puisque ça n'a pas été dit dans l'appel d'offres, lorsque Marchese, qui est celui qui a gagné l'appel d'offres, a préparé le produit, ils ne l'ont pas préparé dans une concentration spécifique. Pendant près de 14 ou 15 mois, la chimiothérapie qui était préparée par Marchese était préparée en n'étant pas dans une concentration spécifique, et à chaque fois qu'elle était utilisée, elle était utilisée de façon diluée.

Le projet de loi met une nouvelle série de mesures en place pour surveiller les pharmacies d'hôpitaux, ce qui n'est pas mauvais et ce qu'on va appuyer. Mais ça ne va pas au cœur du problème, le cœur du problème étant que c'est Medbuy, lorsqu'il a fait l'appel d'offres, qui a fait l'erreur. Quant à moi, c'est là où les changements doivent être faits pour que ce type d'erreur-là ne se reproduise plus jamais.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'm pleased to rise today to speak in favour of Bill 117. I was listening very closely to the member from Nickel Belt, and she brings about good recommendations. But I asked to review again the credentials of Dr. Thiessen, and I'm very impressed with his credentials, and, actually, I remember the member from the official opposition who came to congratulate the minister for appointing such a competent professional, not just in pharmacy but in oncology. So I'm very impressed with him.

He provided the minister with recommendations this past summer, and the minister accepted and endorsed each of his recommendations. Because some may be put forward without needing legislation, we have established an implementation task force to oversee the implementation of Dr. Thiessen's remaining recommendations. But this legislation responds to one of those recommendations, and that recommendation needs specific legislation.

It's always unfortunate when a situation like this happens. The minister reacted very quickly by appointing Dr. Thiessen. I know that the member from Nickel Belt would have much preferred that the minister slow down in putting forward Dr. Thiessen's recommendations, but I strongly disagree. I think that Dr. Thiessen brings to us good recommendations to prevent what did happen with the Marchese company.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: It is always a pleasure to listen to the member from Nickel Belt. I have high respect for her role and activity here as a critic for the NDP on health care matters. I think, even listening to her remarks on this bill, this bill really is an important response to a failure in the health care system, and I think it does achieve reasonable outcomes.

Putting it in context, section 4 of the Health Professions Procedural Code is amended to provide that where a college member resigns or voluntarily relinquishes or restricts his or her privileges, a person such as a member

"who has reasonable grounds to believe that the resignation, relinquishment or restriction, as the case may be, is related to the member's professional misconduct, incompetence or capacity, shall file with the registrar within 30 days after the resignation, relinquishment or restriction a written report setting out the grounds upon which the person's belief is based."

I think it's important that professionals and colleges, who are the regulator, have strong enforcement tools. I really, firmly believe that. After all, with health care, we all depend and trust the professional and their training, and of course the college is an important part of this. I don't know; I'm not qualified here, but certainly someone should have known there was diluted chemotherapy. People's lives and their families and all those things are at risk.

The health care system in Ontario is actually in paralysis right now. I think, even in recent questions in the last couple days on Ornge helicopters—after a year, it still isn't resolved. Mr. Klees has made it very clear that the minister's capacity itself should be somewhat overseen by a college of some sort, maybe removed from the office; I don't know.

I'm saying, too, that I know in my own riding, the minister has failed to respond to Esbriet on IPF. She hasn't listened to other provinces using the same data. She's refusing to give it to Ontario citizens.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's a pleasure to follow on the heels of my colleague from Nickel Belt. We heard her talk about this, because more than 1,200 cancer patients at five hospitals, including 290 in Windsor, many of whom are constituents of mine and constituents of my colleague from Essex, ended up receiving doses of chemo that were weaker than caregivers realized over the course of about a year. This is a problem.

Some of us still realize that the Ontario College of Pharmacists needs more oversight powers for facilities that fall under its jurisdiction, requiring all other facilities to obtain licences from Health Canada.

The member from Nickel Belt, our party's health critic, has questioned why it took a public health crisis for the government to notice the dangers posed by gaps in oversight, and she has pointed out repeatedly that hospitals are outsourcing more and more services, from heart diagnostic tests to urology. There are still questions whether proper oversight is in place across the health care system.

I know last summer in the Windsor Star, reporter Brian Cross spoke to some of the patients who were affected in our area about their concerns after this crisis. One patient, Marlene Roy, who was 60, said, "You're left wondering, did this cause my life to be shorter?" That's a question that many patients are still grappling with, because they were given drugs that weren't what they were supposed to be. Another patient argued: "I've got reassurances from my oncologist that the underdosing won't affect the outcome." She has put her faith in her doctor.

We put a lot of faith in our doctors and in the system—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: I was pleased to hear the member from Nickel Belt give her overview of this very important bill that protects patients from mistakes that happen—and this was quite a systemic failure in the system. One of the key tools we've used here is the committee that the member from Nickel Belt was part of. The member from Oak Ridges–Markham, Helena Jaczek, and I sat on some of those committees, and I think that committee did excellent work. They went through so many technical aspects of this situation.

I know sometimes the member from Durham says some smart things, but sometimes he says some very frivolous things, because this is a very serious matter and it just exemplifies that there are checks and balances. The health care system in Ontario provides important care to over 13 million Ontarians, 24/7.

We're just up the street here from Princess Margaret Hospital, the incredible oncologists at Toronto General Hospital and the incredible pediatric oncologists at Sick-Kids. We have some of the most dedicated health professionals, whether they be the doctors, whether they be the lab technicians, whether they be the nurses—the people who work in these hospitals have so much responsibility.

I hear of so many families going through the trauma of cancer, so I just think that this is a very important bit of intervention that had to be done. Luckily it was caught, because there were some middlemen that tried to game the system, in a way, but at least we're able to put a stop to it with this legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Nickel Belt, you have two minutes.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I thank my colleagues for having toughed it through for a whole hour. You all deserve a medal. It was not exactly the most interesting thing to listen to, but thanks to the comments that have been made. It becomes obvious that we all agree that oversight improves safety in our health care system. We all agree that oversight improves quality in our health care system.

I will warn you. We have to learn from the misery that those 1,202 people went through that when we take services from our hospitals, which have layers upon layers of oversight, and move them into the community without transferring those levels of oversight, we have to know that it will affect safety and we have to know that it will affect quality, because we all agree that when you bring oversight, you improve safety and you improve quality, so when you do the opposite, when you take a program or a service where it has oversight, where it has been offered safely with high quality for a long time and move it into the community—I'm not opposed to moving things into the community when it makes sense; I'm all for that—you cannot forget to also carry with it the oversight that was there, because this is how the system works. Every piece in the system has to be able to trust that the piece before it did its work.

Do you know how bad all of those pharmacists who dispensed those medications feel right now? Do you know how bad all of those nurses who dispensed those diluted chemo drugs feel right now? It is unbelievable. They trusted that the people before them had done their job. We can only trust the system if we have good oversight.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): This House now stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I don't see them here yet, but I'd like to introduce Eric Barbosa and Aida Kummer from my riding of Perth–Wellington.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I wish to introduce Lal Khan Malik, president of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in Canada; Khalifa Abdul Aziz is the president of the Ahmadiyya Abode of Peace; Malik Kaleem Ahmad; Khalid Naeem; Rizwan Masood Mian; Nasir Khan; Karim Tahir; Syed Tariq Ahmad from the Ahmadiyya Peace Abode; Syed Hidayat Ullah Hadi, the editor of the Ahmadiyya Gazette; and Bashir Nasir, photographer. They're here to receive a congratulations on a very green housing initiative. Thank you for being here today.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'd like to take this time to welcome Ralph and Betty Watson from the Brussels area in my riding of Huron–Bruce to this hallowed chamber today.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I would also like to add my voice to welcome members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community and say Es salaam aleikom and Khush amdid.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery the ambassador of Portugal to Canada, His Excellency José Fernando Moreira da Cunha. Welcome, Your Excellency. With him is our consul general of Portugal to Toronto, Mr. Júlio Vilela. We welcome both our guests.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Members will be aware that there appear, on today's Orders and Notices paper, two notices of an opposition day to be debated next week. Under standing order 43(c), the Speaker is required to select one of these notices for consideration. These presented a challenge in this case for two reasons. First, both opposition parties have only one allocated day remaining, and, second, the notices were both received at virtually the same time. Any decision based on these considerations therefore would have been arbitrary.

However, members will also know that standing order 43(a)(iii) provides that five available opposition days in this fall sessional period are to be allocated between the two opposition parties on the basis of the membership of their caucuses relative to each other. Currently, where

circumstance presents us with the situation where it will be possible for there to be only four opposition days this fall, it is, I think, a fair and reasonable thing to apply that same formula. In doing so, the result is that the official opposition is mathematically closer to being entitled to three of four opposition days than the third party is to being entitled to two of four.

I therefore decide that the motion standing in the name of Mr. Hudak is the one that will be selected for debate next week.

It is now time—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If this is an indication of what's going to happen, let it be known that I shall make sure that it doesn't.

VISITORS

Hon. Charles Sousa: Speaker, I apologize for the delay. I just wanted to welcome two individuals from my riding—Mr. Alex Banks, the past president of the Sherway Homeowners Association, and his wife, Linda Banks—to this chamber. They're here on behalf of the Credit Valley Lions Club, which is celebrating their 50th anniversary. Thank you for being here today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is to the Acting Premier. I, like many Ontarians, was shocked at yesterday's decision by Cliffs Natural Resources to pull out of the Ring of Fire.

What is truly unfortunate is the amount of unheeded warnings that your government received throughout the process. The Premier deflected my questions here in the House numerous times and in one instead chose to reminisce about paddling on the Attawapiskat River.

Acting Premier, back in April, Bill Boor, senior vice-president of Cliffs, said that "company officials have yet to talk with representatives of Premier Kathleen Wynne's government." He went on, "As we approach a year since the agreement in terms, that's become more of a concern." In September, he said, "Since last winter's provincial leadership change, talks with Queen's Park have stalled."

Acting Premier, it is clear that the blame lies squarely on the shoulders of your government. Who in your government is going to be held accountable for your failure on this file?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I'll refer this to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Let me begin by saying that our government, our province, remains absolutely committed to seeing smart, sustainable and collaborative development in the Ring of Fire project. This is an extraordinary multi-generational economic development activity, with known mineral potential worth \$60 billion. We know that there is extraordinary interest in this.

I will certainly say that I am disappointed with the decision and the announcement that Cliffs made, but I also appreciate their continuing interest in the project.

What's really important is that we continue to move forward to develop this project. We are going to work diligently to ensure that we are ready to support this development, and we're going to remain firmly committed to working with any and all interested parties to develop the region.

The fact is that we are taking strong action to move the project forward. We are bringing—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: —to create a development corporation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Again to the Acting Premier: How many generations do we have to wait?

What is so shameful is, your government has been bragging about developing the Ring of Fire for years now. On May 9, 2012, your government issued a press release that stated, "Thousands of Jobs Coming to Northern Ontario." The release also touted a refinery in Capreol, promising to employ 450 people during the construction and as many as 450 people in 2015 when it was scheduled to be operational.

Acting Premier, you sold hope to the people of northern Ontario and have failed to deliver. First Nation communities and cities like Thunder Bay and Sudbury are all waiting for the investment in jobs that this project would bring.

You're sitting on the largest deposit of chromite ever discovered in North America. Acting Premier, why have you failed to bring the promised jobs and prosperity that Ontario so desperately needs?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Speaker, we are working incredibly hard on providing really strong action to move this project forward. We are establishing a development corporation that will bring together any and all interested partners to this project. That certainly includes the historic consultations that were undertaken with the Matawa First Nation, important partners, and other industry partners—let alone further discussions with Cliffs—that we intend to continue to have to bring in the corporation.

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May I say, we're also making significant investments in communities, both First Nations and other northern

communities, bringing them forward, and skills upgrading.

But let's also make sure that we recognize how important it is to bring the federal government to the table. We're calling on them to bring matching funds. We are prepared to make very significant investments in this project. That—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: —but we need the federal government to come to the table. The fact is, they have made strong commitments to other projects in Newfoundland and Labrador: hydroelectric projects. So we need you to come and call on the federal government—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Better.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Norm Miller: Again to the Acting Premier: How did things get so far off the rails that Cliffs, the major player in the Ring of Fire, has pulled the plug on their development? You had plenty of warnings, yet even in the face of prominent miners publicly raising concerns about unresolved “agreements with the government of Ontario that are critical to the project's economic viability,” you insisted that the Ring of Fire was moving ahead.

Well, yesterday, Cliffs announced that it would be shuttering its mining camp in the Ring of Fire and closing offices in Thunder Bay and in Toronto. Acting Premier, what do you have to say to these hard-working people who are now out of work as a direct result of your government's failure?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, there continues to be an extraordinarily high level of interest among industry, among First Nations, and among—may I hope to see—the federal government in seeing this project move forward. We are taking very strong action to move it forward—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Burlington will come to order.

Be seated, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Because she was very much engaged and probably, even with my mike on, didn't hear me, the member from Burlington will come to order.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: This project is moving forward; there's no question about it. There's an extraordinarily high level of interest, and we are going to continue to have our discussions.

The formation of the development corporation is crucial to seeing this project moving forward. We are bringing together any and all partners, and I would like to actually have the members of the opposition, let alone members of the third party, recognize the important work that's being done with the First Nations as well. We need to create the climate to allow the private sector to get involved.

We understand how important infrastructure is. That's why we put in place the development corporation. That's why we're going to continue to work with all our partners in this project, a \$60-billion project in terms of mineral potential in a part of the province that's never seen development before.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Deputy Premier. A month ago, my colleague from Parry Sound—Muskoka told you that Cliffs said the Ring of Fire is in a “tenuous state. If the company doesn't have a transportation route, it doesn't have a project.” The Premier's response: She told us that this summer she paddled on the Attawapiskat River.

That's not an urgent call to action. Her reply wasn't about the thousands of jobs at risk, many of them First Nations. Her reply wasn't about the wealth that could be created. No, she paddled 100 kilometres away.

You and your ministers were warned by Cliffs. You have absolutely bungled this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. It's obvious you have absolutely no plan for the north. Will you at least take and implement the PC plan for northern Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, our government remains absolutely committed to seeing the Ring of Fire project move forward. We are committed to smart, sustainable and collaborative development. That is why, indeed, we have set up a development corporation in order to bring all the partners together. That's going to be crucial in terms of making the kinds of decisions we need to make related to infrastructure.

We recognize how important it is to make the right decisions about infrastructure, and that's the work that we're going to be doing. We need to bring our partners to the table. We are doing extraordinary work with our First Nations. We need to bring the federal government to the table. They supported many other projects. Clearly that's crucial.

We'd sure like to have you, over on that side of the House, join our call to have them reach our matching funds. The fact is, this project—we're doing extraordinarily hard work. We'll continue to do hard work. The Ring of Fire project remains an absolute priority for our Premier. We recognize the economic development opportunities, the thousands of jobs that will be created, and we remain confident that indeed the hard work that we're doing will make—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Well, thank you for creating another panel. Deputy Premier, our leader, Tim Hudak,

led a group of us MPPs up to the Ring of Fire site. We all saw first-hand the two actual mine sites that were going to be developed. Each would have seen a \$3-billion investment. The transportation route adds another \$1 billion.

Last week I had the privilege of touring Cliffs's proposed smelter site in Capreol. I must say, it really is a fascinating 4,000-acre site and a further \$3-billion investment that would have happened. Guys, you just blew a \$10-billion deal of a lifetime, and you're about to put more people out of work. Much of those exploration drill bits and drill rods are manufactured in my riding of North Bay and Powassan, and Cliffs was spending \$4 million a month here in Toronto. What will you tell those families who are getting their pink slips this morning?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: It is absolutely startling how suddenly dismissive the member is about a development corporation that's being welcomed by industry, that's being welcomed by the First Nations, something that will help us move this project forward in a way that it needs to happen. It certainly is interesting coming from a party as well that, as part of their PC platform or white paper, were talking about actually dismantling, discarding and shutting down the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines. That's right there in their platform.

The fact is, we remain absolutely committed to this project. We are taking strong action to move it forward. The formation of the development corporation is absolutely vital. We need the federal government's involvement. We have the province's commitment to a significant investment. Industry partners are interested. This is a huge project with a great deal of interest. We look forward to continuing our conversation with Cliffs. Certainly, the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: —other partners that are involved in this are going to bring this project forward. We are going to make this project happen, and we're going to continue the hard work that—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. I'm going to ask that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let me try again. I'm going to ask that we tone it down.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: What about Imperial Oil?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex will come to order.

Final supplementarily.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. Speaker, I have to tell you how appalled I am at a standing ovation for losing a \$10-billion job here in Ontario.

Deputy Premier, last week we learned that Heinz is shuttering their plant in Leamington and shedding 1,000 mostly full-time people. We also learned that while you were warned in advance, you did nothing.

Cliffs warned you a month ago that the project needed urgent action, and again you did absolutely nothing. Your

Premier went canoeing and jogging, but you did nothing about these companies, despite their warnings, which now have come true.

I'm sorry. Now you're disappointed. The northern minister says, "Don't worry. The rock is in the ground. It's not going anywhere. This is a multi-generational opportunity." My question is, which generation did you have in mind to finally get around to doing something?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Indeed we are disappointed by Cliffs's decision, and I do appreciate that they continue to express interest in the project. They have not spoken about suspending it indefinitely. The fact is that we are going to continue to have conversations with them. The fact is that we are moving forward with the project in a most definitive and in a very action-oriented way. That's exactly why we have formed the development corporation. We recognize that this was a business decision by Cliffs, and I respect that. I'll let them speak for themselves, but we are absolutely committed to seeing this project move forward. This development corporation is absolutely key to seeing this project move forward.

We recognize how important infrastructure decisions are. We are prepared to make a significant investment. The province is committed to that investment. We need the federal government on board, but we also want to bring together the other industry partners who have expressed such a strong interest in this project. They're committed to it. This is going to move forward. This project remains an extraordinary priority for our province.

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MINING INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. In 2010, the current Premier and other members of the Liberal cabinet announced that Cliffs Natural Resources would be building a refinery outside of Sudbury. When exactly did the government first learn that the Cliffs project was in jeopardy?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, we have been working closely with Cliffs over the last couple of years, and we recognize that the announcement they made yesterday is very disappointing.

The fact is that we are continuing to move forward on the Ring of Fire project, as I would hope the leader of the third party would want us to do, and I hope she will join us in doing the work that we need to do.

We need to do a number of actions to make this project come to fruition, and those are the actions that we're taking, which is why, indeed, working on the development corporation is absolutely crucial; which is why it's so important for us to continue our work on historic consultations with the Matawa First Nations; which is why we need to continue to make the investments that we've

made to have skills upgrading and communities ready in terms of capacity building. That's the work that we're going to continue to do.

This is a huge project. There is \$60 billion in mineral potential. We are going to see this project move forward, and we're going to continue to take strong action to see that that happens.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Beyond issuing a press release announcing "thousands of jobs coming," what steps did the government take in 2010 to ensure that the jobs they had so confidently announced were actually going to appear?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: The economic development potential for this project remains very much the same. The project has got a mineral potential of \$60 billion. There is extraordinary interest in this project, and that interest continues with Cliffs Natural Resources. But there are other companies, as well, who are very interested in moving forward on this project.

We are going to continue to take strong action to move the project forward. It would be great to have the third party, as well as other members of the opposition, supporting us and moving together with the development corporation.

We've got very interested partners from industry, from the First Nations. We are hoping to have discussions with them very, very soon. The fact is, we need the federal government on board as well.

This is a multi-faceted project; nobody argues with that. But we are going to move this project forward. We continue to remain absolutely, committed to it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The minister didn't mention any steps that they took in 2010 or 2011 or 2012.

Two weeks ago, the minister issued another press release, pledging to create a development corporation for the Ring of Fire. When the minister made that announcement, did he already know that Cliffs would be pulling out?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: As the leader will know, there were some very encouraging, positive comments that were expressed after we announced the creation of the development corporation, and those comments continue.

We are having very important discussions. We have already had very important discussions with a number of potential partners for the development corporation, and those will continue; in fact, they will be redoubled.

We recognize how important it is to make decisions related to infrastructure, and the way to do that, I think, is to bring the potential partners together. Certainly, that includes discussions with members of industry, who are obviously very much involved in the Ring of Fire, recognizing the long-term, let alone the medium-term, economic development potential for this all across northern Ontario in terms of the creation of jobs. That's still our priority.

The fact is, again, we need to have the federal government join us in matching funds. We've seen them support other major projects across the country. We need them at the table. I look forward to having an opportunity to sit down with the federal—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Michael Gravelle:—say they're committed to the project. We need them at—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

MINING INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. You know what? Nobody likes the blame game. We don't want a blame game. We want jobs in this province. That's what the government should be focusing on, not the blame game.

A lot of people are counting on the jobs and prosperity that the natural resources of the Ring of Fire bring, but they worry that the development corporation announcement is once again about a desperate government scrambling to get ahead of bad news, instead of getting something done for the people who need jobs.

Can the minister provide any detail whatsoever about this development corporation that he announced two weeks ago?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, this is certainly not about the blame game. This is about bringing all of our partners together on a project with extraordinary economic development potential for northern Ontario, a project with extraordinary mineral potential: up to \$60 billion. We are very committed to seeing this project move forward.

The development corporation will bring those partners together, bring industry together. We hope to bring First Nations as partners to the project as well. We certainly are inviting the federal government to join us for that project as well. The fact is, that's the key to making the decisions that certainly need to be made related to infrastructure, related to a transportation corridor, and that's why we are so keen to move this development corporation forward.

So, may I say, Mr. Speaker, this project continues to be a huge priority for us. The opportunities for economic development and jobs in the north continue to be enormous, and that's why we are staying so committed to this extraordinarily important project.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Premier promised that "thousands of jobs" were coming—those were her words—but, once again, when people desperate for work look beyond the press releases, they see a government without any plans, any details or, frankly, any idea what they are doing. The only jobs the Liberals seem to rally about and seem to really care about are their own jobs.

Does the minister have any evidence whatsoever that Liberals took any meaningful steps to actually deliver on

the jobs that they had promised—the thousands of jobs that they have promised—back when the Premier promised them?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that we've seen some really interesting opportunities in the mining supply and services sector that have come about as a result of the opportunities we're going to be seeing in the Ring of Fire.

But in terms of the actions that we have taken, I do hope that the leader of the third party would recognize how important our historic consultations with the Matawa First Nations are. Clearly, we need to work with them, and we are very much happy to work with them: Bob Rae representing the Matawa First Nations, Frank Iacobucci representing the provincial government.

It's absolutely crucial that First Nations see those benefits, and in fact I know the leader of the third party has called on us to make that happen. That's a very important part of the process, as is the fact that we need to bring all of our partners together in this development corporation. That will be a key element in moving this project forward. We need to make decisions related to infrastructure. This will allow us to make those decisions, and certainly, again, I can only say how strongly committed we are to seeing this project move forward. It's a huge priority for us.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Across Ontario, people are worried about jobs, and they see unemployment above the national average, 300,000 jobs lost in manufacturing and the highest electricity rates in the entire country; in fact, the entire continent. And their government reaction is a promise to conduct studies, strike panels and churn out press releases. Beyond the talk, we keep seeing the same old status quo.

How can anybody take this government's job plan seriously when it's obviously written on the back of an envelope or maybe on the back of a press release?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, our role and our commitment is to get the best value possible for all Ontarians, and that's exactly what we are doing with the Ring of Fire project. We all understand it is truly a multi-generational opportunity, with a huge mineral potential, and we recognize that the right decisions need to be made and the right climate needs to be provided. That's the hard work that we have been doing, and that speaks to the hard work that we will continue to be doing.

We continue to be very, very excited about the opportunities, but it's important that we do it right, which is why, indeed, establishing a development corporation was such a key part of the process. It's why, indeed, the historic consultations with the Matawa First Nations are so absolutely vital. It's why the investments that we've made in skills upgrading and community capacity building is so important. This is all part of a large project. We're committed to it; we're going to stay committed to it. It's a hugely important project; we're going to move it forward.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

New question.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Robert Bailey: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Yesterday, Imperial Oil announced it would close its lubricant blending division at Sarnia, citing its inability to be competitive in Ontario. This means lost jobs and investment at Imperial, lost jobs and opportunity for the local trades, lost business for local suppliers and lost tax revenue for the city of Sarnia.

Deputy Premier, will you do anything to kick-start our economy or generate investment in Ontario, and did you do anything to compete for those jobs at Imperial Oil and the supporting jobs in the local community?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: This is precisely why, a year ago, we created the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund, a fund which has actually helped to create and retain more than 6,000 jobs in southwestern—

Interjections.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. I don't get things quiet for the last shots.

Carry on.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, of course, the party opposite, the PCs, chose not to support that important investment of \$20 million that has already been responsible for creating and retaining 6,000 jobs in southwestern Ontario.

Last week, I met with Imperial Oil out in Calgary. I also met with another important Sarnia company, Nova Chemicals, headquartered in Calgary. I had meetings with both of them. I have great confidence in the chemical and petrochemical industry in that part of Ontario, and I will continue to work hard to make sure that we support investments, incent the creation of new jobs—and it is succeeding, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Back to the Deputy Premier again: You might ask how that fund is working out for you.

Imperial Oil was founded in Lambton county in 1880. It has been over 100 years in Sarnia, and it has created great jobs.

After 10 years of your Liberal government's skyrocketing energy prices and anti-business policies, companies across this province are heading for greener pastures. Deputy Premier, we saw that at Leamington's Heinz facility last week; Cliffs just announced today—and, of course, Imperial Oil in Sarnia.

Deputy Premier, the hits keep adding up. Will you finally agree that your government is bad for business in Ontario? It's time for a change in the team that's leading Ontario. Just apologize and resign.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Attorney General.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You ain't seen the Speaker mad.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, you haven't—nowhere close.

Minister.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, as the official opposition continues to denigrate and talk down our manufacturing sector, as I mentioned, just last week I met with two companies that have their bases in the Sarnia-Lambton area. I met with their executives to continue to promote investment in that important area.

I need to remind the Legislature as well, of course, that the PCs opposed, back in 2008, the support that we provided to the auto sector. If they had gotten their way, Mr. Speaker, GM and Chrysler would not even be in this province anymore. Instead, we have a record sales year for cars in this country.

We're very proud of what is happening with our businesses and our manufacturers. We continue to invest in that sector.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

For over five years, the Liberal government has failed to develop a framework for northern development in the Ring of Fire, but this inaction hasn't stopped the government from issuing press releases touting opportunities that they have done no work to develop.

Cliffs—the biggest player in the Ring of Fire—pull-out announcement is not only a blow to job creation in the province but demonstrates most clearly that this government has no plan for northern job creation.

If this government is actually doing work, why can't we get a briefing on what this development corporation plan is, which the government belatedly announced two weeks ago?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, we have a very clear and detailed action plan for the Ring of Fire project. That is why we are so keen to move forward with the development corporation.

While I appreciate that the member and the third party may want to play politics with this issue, the fact is that we are moving forward in a number of direct ways to move it forward. That certainly includes the establishment of the development corporation, which is crucial to bringing all the partners together. It certainly includes the

historic consultations with the First Nations, which are vital. It includes our capacity building.

In terms of a briefing, Mr. Speaker, we had an opportunity to discuss this yesterday, and we will be very pleased to have that set up for you.

In terms of the project itself, it's an absolute commitment for us. It continues to be a huge opportunity for northern Ontario. It continues to have huge economic development potential for jobs. We're going to continue to work to keep working on our action plan to move this project forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Mr. Speaker, a plan to enact a plan to implement a plan to put a plan into action is not action.

The Ring of Fire is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for people in Ontario. Last year, this government made a big announcement that it had reached a deal with Cliffs that would create processing jobs in Capreol and that would build infrastructure. Last night's announcement sadly proves that there was no deal, no plan, and that government inaction on this opportunity is costing the province jobs.

Why did the government stall for five years instead of creating a framework for developing job creation in the Ring of Fire?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, we've got a very close working relationship with Cliffs, and we will continue to speak with them about this. There are other companies who are very, very interested in the Ring of Fire development as well.

This is a huge economic development opportunity which everyone in this House certainly knows about, and many people in the province know about. That's why we have got a clear plan moving forward. That's why we have made it so important to invest in skills upgrading. That's why we have invested significantly in capacity building. That's why we are involved in these historic consultations with the First Nations. The member opposite understands how important that is.

Perhaps most critically, that's why we are so excited about the establishment of a development corporation, because we recognize that, indeed, that will be the piece bringing together all the partners to move this project forward.

ONTARIO PROVINCIAL POLICE

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. The Ontario Provincial Police is responsible for policing almost one million square kilometres of land across our province, over 100,000 square kilometres of waterways, and two thirds of the municipalities in a province that makes up almost 40% of the country's population.

Day in and day out, OPP officers are patrolling our roads and highways, helping Ontarians where they're in need, when they're in need, and providing excellent

police service to keep communities safe. Our government and the OPP are committed to ensuring the safety of all Ontarians. Like all first responders, OPP officers are running towards danger when everyone else is running to safety.

On Tuesday, our government introduced Bill 133, An Act to amend the Ontario Provincial Police Collective Bargaining Act. Could the minister please explain to the House the intentions behind this bill?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I want to thank the member from Vaughan for this question. I couldn't agree more with his comments this morning. OPP officers are vital to Ontario. If our communities are not safe, then we cannot build the successful, compassionate and united province that I believe all parties here are striving for.

But we need to level the playing field for OPP officers. This bill, if it's passed, will amend the Ontario Provincial Police Collective Bargaining Act, 2006, and would make the labour rights of OPP officers consistent with the rights of officers working for municipal police services. We want to make the system fairer across the province, and I really look forward to working closely with both of the opposition parties, who have endorsed this bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It's great to hear from the minister that we are making efforts to make sure to make labour rights consistent for all police officers in Ontario. I understand that the proposed changes would move the management rights clause out of the legislation and into the collective agreements for uniformed and civilian staff.

I have a two-pronged follow-up question for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. If the bill is passed, how many uniformed and civilian staff will be impacted by the changes, and secondly, were these amendments meant to pass as part of the budget?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: If passed, these changes would ensure more consistency in the OPP Association's collective bargaining. With that said, 9,000 OPPA members would be impacted.

These amendments were meant to pass as part of the 2012 budget. The removal of these measures in committee was an error, and one that the other parties agree was not intentional. I know this item is something that the official opposition and the third party support. I believe this gives us a great opportunity to show Ontarians that we can work together on common goals, and I really look forward to that opportunity.

In closing, I want to show my great appreciation for these 9,000 men and women who work with the OPP on an everyday basis.

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DRIVE CLEAN

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Acting Premier. I continue to point out that the Supreme Court of Canada has in fact ruled that profits made off of

revenue-neutral programs like Drive Clean are an illegal tax and must be repaid. So I was surprised to see that your environment minister ignored the letter I sent him earlier this month outlining how the Liberal government could bring itself in line with Canadian law. It's quite simple, actually: First, stop imposing illegal taxes today. Second, pay back the \$19 million that's been taken from the pockets of Ontario's drivers. But you continue to refuse to take either of these steps.

Deputy Premier, how do you expect Ontarians to have any respect for your government when you have no respect for Canadian law?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: As noted in the fall economic statement, we are addressing Drive Clean. We want it to be revenue-neutral. We know that the work done over the many years with the Drive Clean program has helped to improve our quality of life, protect public health and also reduce emissions.

We also mentioned at great length the need to provide for consumer protection. It's not just Drive Clean; we're also looking at ways to control cellphone contract pricing to save consumers more money.

In this case, we will do our effort to ensure that Drive Clean remains revenue-neutral, notwithstanding the fact that over many years it was subsidized and the taxpayers were actually covering the excess cost of the Drive Clean program throughout that time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Back to the Acting Premier: The Ontario PC Party has now been calling on the Liberals to scrap Drive Clean for more than two and a half years. Nearly everyone agrees it's time to phase out the program. In fact, even officials in your own environment ministry say it's time to end Drive Clean because the program has, in fact, outlived its usefulness.

I couldn't help but notice that the NDP leader hinted earlier this week that she'll support keeping this temporary program running indefinitely—if you lower the fees by a couple of bucks. Deputy Premier, will you continue to force Ontario drivers to pay hundreds of dollars for your faulty e-test as a result of your collusion with the NDP?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The Drive Clean program—brought forward by the other government, no less—was a good move. It is about saving lives. It's also about controlling emissions, improving the environment in which we live. It has taken hold and we have made a lot of advancements. We will continue to work with the program to ensure that it's revenue-neutral, and reduce the costs to consumers to protect the interests of all concerned. I think that's an appropriate thing for us to do.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Less than a week after Heinz announced it would close its Leamington plant, we learn that Heinz will invest \$28 million to

expand its facility in Ohio and create almost 250 new jobs there. Get this: The reason they chose Ohio was the state-enabled job creation tax credit that netted Heinz \$513,000 for moving Leamington jobs there. New Democrats have long called for a similar job creation tax credit here in Ontario. Some 740 people will be out of work in Leamington and 46 area tomato growers will lose a significant contract because of this government's inaction.

Why did this government ignore the advice of New Democrats and refuse to implement a job creation tax credit that would keep jobs here in Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question. Of course, I think all of us are very disappointed with the decision of Heinz to close the plant in Leamington. Of course, they're also closing two plants in the United States as well, and they made this based on business decisions.

However, we've been working very hard. I've spoken with the local officials and the local MPP, of course. My staff have been on the ground—yesterday—meeting with members of the supply chain to make sure that we do whatever we can for them. Tomorrow, I've got my ministry, together with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, sitting down with the union and the employees. We're looking at all possible options. In fact, I'll be travelling myself to Leamington tomorrow to meet with the local officials and the leadership there, the business community, to see what we can do—everything from repurposing the plant to perhaps looking at a co-operative opportunity. Certainly, our first priority is the employees, their families and the broader community.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Again, to the minister: It is amazing that you have 10 trade offices around the world but you don't have a made-in-Ontario jobs plan.

On Tuesday, the Premier stood in this House and she said they had done "everything we could" to keep this plant from closing—everything. But had she created a job creation tax credit along the lines that New Democrats had suggested, there would be a good chance, there would be some hope, that those 740 Leamington workers wouldn't be losing their jobs.

How can this Premier claim that her government did everything they could when you outright rejected a New Democrat solution that would have saved 740 Leamington jobs?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Judging by her supplementary question, I'm not sure if she's proposing to do what her government did in the 1990s, which was to close our international trade missions, because we're not going to do that. We believe that they're important. In fact, the future of Ontario businesses is to find those opportunities overseas in the emerging and new economies to be able to increase the jobs here in Ontario; to find, for their services and goods, other opportunities.

We're working hard with the employees, the unions, the labour representatives as well as the local businesses and the local leadership in Leamington to do whatever

we can to make sure that there are opportunities for these employees going forward. As I mentioned, I'll be there tomorrow. My ministry is already on the ground. Training, colleges and universities is there working with the union employees. We're working hard to make sure that this is a positive result.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Ma question est pour le ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi, l'honorable Eric Hoskins.

Speaker, as you'll appreciate, small businesses are a fundamental engine of job growth, a cornerstone of our economy. It's been estimated that something in the order of about 99% of Ontario businesses are in fact small or medium-sized.

Of course I see this vividly as I tour my own riding of Etobicoke North, as we have quite a vibrant business sector in addition to our residential areas. These enterprises are encouraged and heartened to learn that our government's plans for jobs and growth will support small business, cut red tape and invest in infrastructure necessary to create a dynamic and innovative business climate.

From my briefings, it's clear that the Supporting Small Businesses Act is part of this plan. Can the minister please inform this chamber about this act and its impact on the bottom line of small businesses in my riding of Etobicoke North and broadly across the province?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you to the member for his question. He's right that small businesses are critical to the strength of our economy. As jobs minister, I've had the privilege of meeting with many, many business owners right across this province. They're moving our economy forward. Their innovation is not only making our economy more dynamic, but it is creating jobs.

This is why our government wants to offer every support we can, and incentives, to help make doing business in this province easier. That's why we've introduced Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act. This act will cut taxes for 60,000 small businesses and eliminate that tax altogether for 90% of the small businesses in this province.

Business is behind this bill. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business supports this act. They've said, "By passing Bill 105, you have the opportunity to demonstrate your commitment to supporting the province's job creators." This is from their press release.

I've got additional issues that I'll address in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you, Minister. I appreciate your comments regarding these long-sought-after changes to the Ontario tax regime. I'll get right to the point: What is the importance of finishing third reading, passing this bill and proclaiming this as Ontario law?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Not passing this legislation before the House rises means that tens of thousands of our

small businesses will have to pay higher taxes in the new year. More taxes mean less money to spend on expanding their operations, on going global and on hiring youth. It means less growth for our economy.

We've already eliminated 80,000 regulations pertaining to businesses. We've launched our \$295-million youth jobs strategy. We've eliminated the small business surtax, the capital tax.

Mr. Speaker, I call on all my colleagues in this Legislature to support the Supporting Small Businesses Act to make our economy stronger and make doing business easier for the entrepreneurs and business leaders who contribute so much to this province.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Health: It's been some two years that we've heard from the Minister of Health that all is well at Ornge. Here is yesterday's headline from the *Toronto Star*: "Ornge Endangered Helicopter Pilots, Federal Probe Says."

From the *Globe and Mail*: "Ornge's Lack of Training Endangered Pilots' Safety, Federal Report Says."

From the *Toronto Sun*: "Next Tragedy Inevitable Unless Service Stripped of Air Operations." And today, we find that last Friday, there were no helicopters available in Thunder Bay, in Moosonee and in Kenora due to a helicopter pilot shortage. We continue to hear from front-line staff that the air operations of Ornge are in serious trouble.

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Three federal reports, continuous input from front lines—why does this minister not acknowledge that the aviation aspects of Ornge should be outsourced? Even the CEO agrees with that.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have to say that there has been an extraordinary change at Ornge, and change does take some time. But I have to say that the new leadership team at Ornge is extraordinary. It is an exceptional group of leaders. I believe that even the member from Newmarket–Aurora has, on several occasions, acknowledged the skills and the expertise of that new leadership. They are doing their work. I have confidence in them that they are doing the right thing.

When I look at someone like Dr. Andrew McCallum, who was prepared to come and work as president and CEO of Ornge—he came to that job when it was a very difficult organization to take over. He is an exceptionally well-qualified person with experience in trauma and with experience as a pilot. This is a man who is leading real change at Ornge, and I think it would be appropriate that we support him in that change.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Then why doesn't the minister listen to Dr. McCallum? Here's what Dr. Andrew McCallum told the public accounts committee two weeks ago when I asked him if divesting the aviation operations of Ornge would be considered as part of his strategic plan.

I quote from Dr. McCallum's testimony: "The short answer is yes, we're open to all models.... [P]roper strategic planning should consider all aspects of what the company does and what's best for the mission that the company is trying to achieve." Why isn't she listening to Dr. McCallum? The CEO is willing to look at all options, but when I put the same question to the minister just days after that, her response was an emphatic "No, we will not do that."

Would the minister tell us and the pilots and the paramedics and Dr. McCallum why she is pre-empting Ornge's own strategic plan to consider outsourcing the aviation operations of Ornge? Will she do that?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would urge the member opposite to actually take a look at Hansard. What he suggested that we do is privatize Ornge. I tell you, we are not going to privatize Ornge. To the member opposite, I would say: Check Hansard.

There is an ideological bent in the party opposite to privatize services. They privatized the 407. I think we all know that we have lost billions of dollars in revenue as a result of that scheme. They had a failed privatization of hydro. The rates skyrocketed by 30% because of that commitment to privatize.

I take advice from Dr. McCallum. Your question was about privatizing Ornge, and privatizing Ornge is not a plan.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My question is to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. Good morning, Minister. Because there was no ministry oversight, hundreds of deficient girders were installed along the Herb Gray Parkway. It happened because there was no clause in the P3 construction contract that called for independent testing and inspection reports to be sent to the ministry.

Today, the highly respected Canadian Council of Independent Laboratories claims that dozens of other road and bridge contracts also lack this independent testing clause. Will the minister investigate and report to this House on all MTO and Infrastructure Ontario construction contracts that do not require independent safety testing and inspection reports?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Good morning to you, my friend from Windsor–Tecumseh. We actually have gone through, in the last several months, and inspected every girder production facility. All MTO projects are tested. As you obviously know from the Windsor experience and others, we do destructive testing when necessary. I have met with this very respected body. We've had a number of conversations. I have asked them to deliver their criticisms in a paper. The ADM, Gerry Chaput, has reviewed this. While I appreciate their concern, I don't think that's a fair representation of the facts.

There will be tougher rules and regulations as a result of what happened in Windsor–Essex, but what I also want to point out is that all of those girders were tested twice and are being removed and paid for by the private company at full cost recovery.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Speaker, let's admit it: The P3 experiment with the short warranty periods has failed. Let's get back to the old, proven method of requiring independent testing and inspection with the results given not to the contractor, Minister, but to the people paying the bills. Face it: Public safety may be endangered here. Taxpayers may be faced with the cost of repairing or replacing this infrastructure years earlier than expected.

Will the minister end this failed warranty experiment and direct MTO and Infrastructure Ontario to ensure all infrastructure projects require independent safety testing?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, while I respect my friends in the third party, there's a very good reason I'm not a member of that party, and it's because of the ideological bent. This is classic example of it.

We have had over 80 AFP projects—over 80. All of them have been under budget. All of them have delivered billions of dollars of savings and, when there have been errors, the private sector has had to pay for it.

In spite of the evidence, the ideological bent of the NDP won't allow them to be pragmatic enough to realize this has been a huge success. So the party of pragmatism over here always enjoys the blinkers on the right and our left, and this is another one of those old ways we always used to do it: lack of innovation, which is why they're the third party.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Education. This week, in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt, students are participating in Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week activities. We have all heard heartbreaking stories where students have been bullied by their peers, and some of us in this House may have experienced bullying first-hand. Bullying is a serious issue affecting their learning, and it must be addressed.

This week, we all need to take time, not only to raise awareness about bullying in our schools, but also to look for ways to prevent it from occurring.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, can she share with the House what action our government is taking in stopping but, more importantly, preventing bullying in our schools?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the member from Scarborough—Agincourt for raising this important issue. The member is absolutely right: Prevention plays such an important role in combatting bullying in our schools, which is why, almost two years ago, we introduced legislation, Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act. For the first time ever, we defined "bullying" in legislation, so that every student, every teacher, every principal and every parent knows what we are talking about when we say bullying is not okay in our schools.

The Accepting Schools Act requires school boards to develop a bullying prevention plan. It must be created in consultation with local communities and made publicly available. Schools are also required to conduct school

climate surveys to check on the effectiveness of their bullying prevention plans.

Speaker, all members of the school community need to be involved in promoting respectful and caring relationships to make sure that every student feels safe and accepted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: I thank the minister for her response. It's very appropriate that we have in the gallery a bunch of young students, visitors, and we're talking about issues affecting your classroom and your schoolyard, and that's the right thing to do.

Minister, you have outlined some of the initiatives on how our government is addressing bullying in our schools and bullying prevention. However, we see and hear that, more and more, bullying goes beyond the classroom and the schoolyard. Technology has allowed bullying to follow students wherever they go.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, can she share with the House what action our government is taking to confront the growing and troubling problems of bullying affecting our students?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Cyberbullying has been a concern of our government for many years. That is why the Accepting Schools Act explicitly defines cyberbullying as a form of bullying, and, in fact, our Education Act already stated that if a principal believes that actions which occurred online had a negative impact on the school climate, the principal has the authority to take action, i.e., discipline the responsible students.

1130

I was also pleased to learn just yesterday that the federal government will be tabling legislation to amend the Criminal Code to combat cyberbullying. I know my colleague the Attorney General and our government have been calling on the federal government to make it an offence to distribute intimate photos or video recordings of a person without that person's consent.

These are all important steps being taken to combat bullying. We are all responsible for combatting bullying in schools and in the workplace.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question today is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, the highly successful Red Seal Program has allowed tradespeople holding certificates of qualification in their respective provinces to have mobility in their trades. These red seal holders achieved a higher standard in their examinations. Only Quebec does not participate, and we all know what's going on in Quebec.

A very credible contractor right here in Ontario has hired a red seal plumber from BC. He came back to Ontario to help his ailing father. Now we find out that under the College of Trades and their trades equivalency assessment, it will take a minimum of six weeks before he can work and a fine of up to \$10,000 for both him and the employer if he works at all during that six-week period.

Are we not trying to create jobs here in Ontario? Enough is enough of this nonsense, of this ridiculous red tape and bureaucracy. What are we going to tell companies like this? They need the help now. They've got a qualified person who can do the work now. Will both your Liberal government and your NDP friends agree that we have to finally abolish this Liberal boondoggle once and for all?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

Be seated, please. Thank you.

The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I think what the member opposite is trying to do is say that every challenge that exists in the skilled trades, in apprenticeships or anywhere in that sector is the fault of the College of Trades.

There have been challenges between provinces in terms of ensuring that we can have our workers flow through our apprenticeship programs and our red seal programs for a very long period of time, and the provinces, in fact, and the federal minister are working together to try to resolve those issues.

For the life of me, I don't know why the member continues to be obsessed with trying to do away with the College of Trades. Why would he be against a body that's going to provide greater consumer protection for those that hire skilled trade workers? Why would he be against self-governance for this industry, something that traditionally Conservatives are in favour of? Why would he be against a body that's going to promote the skilled trades to our young people?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I can go on, Mr. Speaker, and I'd be happy to, but I think you're going to tell me to close off very soon—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No; now.

Hon. Brad Duguid: —so I'll stop there, and I'll finish my discussion in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Well, Minister, the trades equivalency assessment is being done by the College of Trades. It wasn't done before you created this monster.

I didn't give you the name of the contractor—and you know why—because we're afraid your enforcement cops will go out and harass them. That's what they're doing. The fact you even have a trades equivalency assessment is an insult to the highly skilled Canadian tradespeople. These people want to work in our province.

We're losing Heinz; we're losing Cliffs; we're losing all these different companies. This guy actually wants a job, and he's got a job to go to. Now, because of so much negativity around the College of Trades, we now know that you've hired an expensive communications department down there—by the way, at the expense of the tradespeople.

Interjection.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: No, it's not David Tsubouchi. It's a whole new group of communications people down there trying to deflect the letters to the editor. They're

wanting Pat Dillon types to write letters to the editor to try to deflect the negativity around the College of Trades.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): First of all, let's tone it down. Second of all, comments to the Chair are most appropriate, because then I can deal with the heckling, so don't respond to it.

Wrap up, please, and we'll go to the minister.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: So, Minister, we now know that you and your NDP friends are fighting for the Working Families money, but can't you all agree that it's time to join with Tim Hudak and the PC caucus and get rid of this ridiculous College of Trades?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

For the life of me, I don't know why the member would be opposed to all the good things that the College of Trades is doing. He points to things that have been in existence long before the College of Trades came along and thinks that somehow, just because we set up a College of Trades, those challenges will somehow mysteriously disappear. There are still challenges, and the College of Trades, in conjunction with our government, in conjunction with provinces and territories across the country, will continue to work on those issues.

But, Mr. Speaker, why would he be opposed to our efforts, through the College of Trades, to crack down on the underground economy? That's something that skilled tradespeople want us to do. Why are you trying to get in the way of that? Why would you be opposed to the College of Trades' efforts to ensure that in workplaces across this province health and safety is being maintained? Why would you be opposed to our efforts to protect those who have worked so hard to get their credentials?

It's time to stop playing politics. It's time to start working with our skilled tradespeople.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Jimmy Velgakis, my constituent, has diabetes and is on a hunger strike outside the WSIB office. He's also 72 years old. It has been 10 days, and Jimmy is ill. His lawyers and all of us are frightened that we will lose him.

Two years ago, the WSIB made a promise to Jimmy that he would get a fresh hearing based on the merits and justice of his case, but that promise was broken. As you know, I am also fasting along with Jimmy because no response from the WSIB has been forthcoming—none whatsoever, and I've tried.

Minister, will you step in to save Jimmy's life?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member opposite for asking the question. I share the member's concern about Mr. Velgakis's health and his safety, and I urge the gentleman to end his hunger strike in order to sustain and, of course, protect his health.

The member opposite and I have spoken about this issue, Speaker. The member knows that, as the Minister of Labour, I'm not able to get involved in the particulars of a case. I cannot speak about the issues and the merit of the case. Both the WSIB and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Appeals Tribunal are arm's-length agencies, and it would be highly inappropriate for me to speak in any detail, in any specifics about the merits and issues of this case.

I just really hope that Mr. Velgakis ends the hunger strike and will be able to get back to health.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Mr. Velgakis—Jimmy—is a man of great dignity and great commitment. This is the second hunger strike he has been on in two years. He's not going anywhere. I know what the rules say, but I think this is a situation that calls for compassion and calls for justice and calls for someone to act, especially this minister, outside of those rules, if necessary.

On Tuesday, the OFL is staging a rally in support of Jimmy. There will be hundreds out on the street in front of the WSIB. Civil Liberties has also been involved. To settle Jimmy's case wouldn't cost a lot of money. We're talking about a fairly small amount here.

More to the point, at this point and particularly in this season—we're leading up to Christmas—I'm asking you: How much is your ministry's promise worth? I'm also asking: How much is a life worth to your ministry?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, again, I'm very concerned about the health of Mr. Velgakis, and I urge the member opposite—I think we need to convince Mr. Velgakis to end his hunger strike. His health is paramount and far more important than anything else.

My understanding is that his claim has been heard by the WSIB now in two instances. It has gone to appeal. Most recently, there was a second review that was done in—in 2012, there were two hearings that were done, and a decision was rendered earlier this year. He still has recourse to further requests, a reconsideration, to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Appeals Tribunal and, of course, judicial review at the Superior Court of Justice.

But I think what's most important for all of us is to urge him to end his hunger strike and be safe and healthy.

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have one shout-out, and that is to the member from Mississauga East—Cooksville, who is celebrating a birthday today. Happy birthday.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands adjourned until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1140 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Toby Barrett: Speaker, as you will know, there are many people in the precinct representing the Cana-

dian Lebanese community and the World Lebanese Cultural Union. Many people are now at a reception enjoying some Lebanese food, but they will be drifting in and out during the afternoon.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SCHOOL FUNDING

Mr. Ted Arnott: In January of this year, the Ministry of Education announced funding for 87 capital projects, including 39 new schools. They allocated \$700 million to pay for these projects. Going forward, we can reasonably expect the Ministry of Education will be allocated funding to construct the new schools that Ontario communities need, as has always been the case.

Surely there is room in a budget of this size to build the Halton Catholic District School Board's number one priority, a new Holy Cross elementary school in Georgetown. At the invitation of school board officials, I have visited this school on three separate occasions this year: April 19, June 26 and September 17. The school has a caring professional staff and bright, enthusiastic students, but the physical state of the school building itself, dating back to the late 1950s, can only be described as decrepit.

I first raised the need for a new Holy Cross school with the Minister of Education in May. I discussed it with her, hand-delivering her a letter dated May 9, to inform her of our need. I followed up on May 29, speaking in the Ontario Legislature, again expressing my support and urging the minister to support it as well.

Recently, the Halton Catholic board submitted its capital priorities business case, confirming a new Holy Cross school as their number one priority. The board has done its part. The need has been established. Our students, present and future, deserve a decent learning environment, and I urge the minister to approve funding for a new Holy Cross school without delay.

EVENTS IN HAMILTON EAST-STONEY CREEK

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, there were two events in my riding last week that encourage us to give more and support our communities.

Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada's expanded initiative, Ability to Bring Change: The active youth program gives Hamilton youth access to inspirational workshops and programs designed to educate them in the benefits of physical activity and healthy eating. The program will also target developing leadership skills.

Expanding the club's Youth ABC programs will include current healthy living topics in a youth-oriented setting. My deep appreciation goes to the Boys and Girls Club for their work on this initiative, but particularly to the Coca-Cola Foundation for its \$100,000 donation to be shared by several of these clubs across our province.

The second big event was a donation of \$5,000 to the Stoney Creek food bank. This much-needed donation was made by the Insurance Bureau of Canada. I sincerely thank them for their initiative and their generosity.

Although we like to think that we can make significant changes for our community and we work very hard to do so, without the contributions of large organizations like the Coca-Cola Foundation and the Insurance Bureau of Canada, many of our community organizations would barely get by.

Having said that, I'd be remiss if I didn't extend my sincere thanks to those volunteers who put in the many hours to ensure that these programs are available for those in our community.

NOBLETON AND KING CITY HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

Ms. Helena Jaczek: For 55 years, the Nobleton and King City Horticultural Society has played an integral part in keeping my great riding of Oak Ridges–Markham green and beautiful. The society, led by President Deborah Socol, along with Vice-Presidents Lorraine Feast and John Bot, Secretary Sheila Middleton, Treasurer Gordon Berry, and many others, works to promote and inform the public about gardening, one of Canada's most popular hobbies.

One of their signature events is the annual garden tour, which I have attended many times. The garden tour provides the public with the ability to see some of the most stunning gardens in King township and, if I may say so, in the province. For example, the township of King has twice received top honours from the not-for-profit organization Communities in Bloom for its floral displays and community involvement.

The society also organizes lectures by guest speakers for its members. In October, the society heard from the Master Gardeners of Ontario, an independent non-profit organization dedicated to helping home gardeners.

On Monday, November 25, they will have their AGM, complete with a wreath-making demo, which shows us that gardening and horticulture is a passion that is not limited to the warmer months.

As an avid gardener myself, I look forward to seeing what new treasures in King township the society will uncover in the future. Congratulations to all involved.

LEBANESE INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. Toby Barrett: We're proud to recognize the 70th anniversary of Lebanese independence. I thank the World Lebanese Cultural Union for organizing today's flag-raising ceremony—and there are representatives in the members' gallery here today—a flag displaying the proud symbol of Lebanon, the mighty and majestic cedar.

I travelled in Lebanon in 1969. I remember the cedars. I remember the gleaming city of Beirut on the Mediterranean, the beautiful, ancient harbour of Tyre, and the beaches of Tripoli—this is my Lebanon. And the food—

there's food being served today: tabbouleh, hummus, stuffed grape leaves and mazzah.

On Monday, November 22, 1943, France yielded to pressure from the Lebanese people. They released the prisoners—the President, the Prime Minister and other cabinet ministers—from Rashaya; hence Lebanese Independence Day.

Today, over 150,000 Lebanese Canadians call Canada and Ontario home. They are here in a belief in peace and prosperity that brought Druze, Muslims and Christians to Ontario in hope for a better future for their children. Lebanese Canadians have come to embody the greatest ambitions of both the land of their ancestors and the home of their children.

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I know everyone in this House is aware of the devastation of Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines. Thousands of lives have been lost, and many times that many people are currently without a home or medical assistance.

Three years ago, the members of this House reached out to assist the victims of the earthquake in Chile, in partnership with the Scadding Court Community Centre, located a short distance away from Queen's Park. Your assistance raised enough money to build 60 temporary shelters. Once again, I'm asking for your help.

Scadding Court has partnered with my office to host an event to raise funds to provide front-line emergency medical assistance to people in need in the Philippines. I will be in touch with each of you with further details when they're finalized, and I hope you will give as generously as you did before.

Like all donations from Canadians to registered Canadian charities, money raised in this campaign before December 9 will be matched by the federal government. I would like to thank director Kevin Lee and the rest of the staff at Scadding Court Community Centre for their tireless efforts on behalf of the people in need.

GERALDINE HEANEY

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I am pleased to rise in the House today to honour Geraldine Heaney, a Westonian who was recently inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame. Geraldine is only the third female to ever be inducted into the coveted hall and only the second Canadian female to be given the honour.

Her parents encouraged her passion by allowing her to join a hockey team at the age of 10, where she began playing with girls up to 16 years old. At the age of 13, she was recruited by the North York-based Aeros hockey club.

Geraldine's impressive résumé includes an Olympic gold medal from Salt Lake City in 2002, a silver medal from the 1998 Olympics in Nagano, and helping Canada win the gold medal at the first seven world champion-

ships—and she is the only Canadian to enjoy all seven of these titles.

The last year she played with the national team in 2002, they won the Olympics; and the last year she played with the Aeros in 2004, they won the national championship through her winning goal in overtime—and she was almost three months pregnant at the time.

While her playing days may be over, she stays dedicated to the sport through coaching youth, including her daughter. Please join me in congratulating Geraldine Heaney on her dedication and courage. She will forever be a role model for many young girls in York South-Weston and beyond.

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TOWN OF ST. MARYS

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I want to congratulate the town of St. Marys, which will soon become home to Canada's largest tire remanufacturing factory. Green Arc Tire Manufacturing has chosen St. Marys as the location for its new facility.

I would like to recognize the mayor, council and residents of St. Marys for their success in making St. Marys such an attractive community to live and work. I also want to recognize the town's CAO, Kevin McLlwin, and town staff for their leadership and hard work in pursuing this opportunity.

St. Marys, like municipalities across Perth-Wellington, is fortunate to have such dedicated, professional staff whose work is making a difference. For the people of Perth-Wellington, the new Green Arc tire factory will mean 340 new jobs. Production is expected to begin in February, with used tires being brought to the plant, scanned for quality and remodelled for sale at discounted rates.

I would like to commend Canadian-owned Green Arc Tire Manufacturing for bringing this technology to Ontario, and welcome them to St. Marys. Thank you for investing in our area, and thank you for investing in Ontario at a time when so many manufacturers are facing real challenges. It speaks to the fact that Perth-Wellington and the town of St. Marys are open and attractive places for business and job creation.

Again, congratulations to the town of St. Marys on this exciting announcement.

CEDRIC LEBLANC

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I rise to recognize Cedric LeBlanc of Ottawa, a member of Local 793 of the International Union of Operating Engineers and the College of Trades. He was honoured recently for helping to save the life of a fellow worker. LeBlanc was presented with the Kyle Knox memorial award at Local 793's dinner dance on November 16. Mike Gallagher, the business manager of the union, presented him with the award.

The award is named after Kyle James Knox, a 24-year-old Local 793 apprentice who tragically was killed

in Toronto on October 11, 2011. Kyle was operating a front-end loader when a drill rig from another company toppled over, injuring five and killing Kyle. The award is given to operators who go above and beyond the call of duty.

On November 27, 2012, LeBlanc came to the rescue of crane operator Jean Marc Legault, who was working at a job site in Ottawa. Legault was working in a crane 200 feet above the ground and had accidentally sliced his wrist while cutting a grease tube, leading to a serious arterial bleed. LeBlanc provided first aid and helped bring Legault to ground level, where he recovered in the hospital. If LeBlanc had not acted as quickly as he did, Legault may have lost his life.

On behalf of us all here at Queen's Park, thanks to you, Cedric LeBlanc, for saving the life of your colleague that day.

DEER HUNT

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Today marks the start of one of the four-day deer hunts in Short Hills Provincial Park. From today, November 21, to November 24, and again, from November 28 to December 1, the deer will be harvested in Short Hills, bordering St. Catharines and Pelham.

The hunt asks many more questions than there are answers for currently, Mr. Speaker. Locally, there are over 100 homes that are concerned with the safety of the harvest in that particular area and are asking questions about the number of COs participating or those monitoring this 6.6-square-kilometre provincial park in the Niagara Peninsula.

The MNR states that the Short Hills holding capacity is 45 to 50 deer, yet currently there are over 300 deer in that particular area. The ministry is saying the numbers need to be reduced to those 45 to 50, yet the science evidence is not out there to support that position at this time.

Last year's harvest only removed seven animals. How is that assisting the harvest to ensure that the deer maintain that sustainability level? Not only that, but how is it managing the population, and where are we sure that the correct animals are being removed, as is occurring in the rest of the province through the deer management units in the province of Ontario?

Mr. Speaker, the minister needs to answer the questions of the people who have many, many more questions about the security of the individuals and the homes in that area, and the viability and the sustainability of the deer in that particular park.

VISITORS

Ms. Dipika Damerla: A point of order, please?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order from the member from Mississauga East-Cooksville.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Speaker. I seek your indulgence. I'd like to introduce some esteemed guests in the gallery here.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Proceed.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you. I'm delighted to welcome many guests who are here to listen later on to our ministerial statement on the Holodomor. I'll begin with Anatoliy Oliinyk, Consul General of Ukraine in Toronto; Mr. Orest Steciw, president, League of Ukrainian Canadians; Dr. Oleh Romanyshyn, League of Ukrainian Canadians; Ms. Olya Grod, executive director, Ukrainian National Federation of Canada; Mr. Ihor Walter Baryn, president, Ukrainian National Federation of Canada; Ms. Olya Sheweli, president of the Ukrainian Women's Organization of Canada and president of the Council of Ukrainian Credit Unions of Canada; Ms. Oksana Rewa, president of the UCC Toronto branch; Mr. Nikolai Bilaniuk, president of the UCC Ottawa branch; Mr. Steve Andrusiak, UCC Ontario provincial president; Ms. Natalie Andrusiak; Ms. Lydia Falcomer, president, UCC Niagara region; Orysia Lysyk, interim head, UCC Oshawa; Ms. Irene Mycak, national chair, Holodomor awareness; Marsha Skrypuch, author, Brantford; Walter Kish, columnist, Oshawa; Daria Luci, League of Ukrainian Canadian Women; Yvan Baker, past president, UCC; Iryna Korpan; Nina Butska; Gene Yakovitch; and Andrew Melnyk. Welcome, and thank you for coming.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome all our guests.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Ms. Soo Wong: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Trevor Day): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 77, An Act to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997 to provide safety requirements related to the presence of unsafe levels of carbon monoxide on premises / *Projet de loi 77, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la prévention et la protection contre l'incendie pour prévoir des exigences en matière de protection contre la présence, dans des lieux, de niveaux dangereux de monoxyde de carbone*,

The title of which is amended to read:

Bill 77, An Act to proclaim Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week and to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997 to provide safety requirements related to the presence of unsafe levels of carbon monoxide on premises / *Projet de loi 77, Loi proclamant la Semaine de la sensibilisation au monoxyde de carbone et modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la prévention et la protection contre l'incendie pour prévoir des exigences en matière de protection contre la présence, dans des lieux, de niveaux dangereux de monoxyde de carbone*.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 3, 2013, the bill is ordered by third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Estimates and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Trevor Day): The Standing Committee on Estimates reports the following resolutions:

Resolved, that supply in the following amounts and to defray the expenses of the following ministries be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2014:

Ministry of Finance, ministry administration: \$42,376,300—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Dispensed.

Pursuant to standing order 63(d), an order for concurrence for each of the resolutions reported from the committee will be placed on the orders and notices paper.

Report deemed adopted.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

HOLODOMOR MEMORIAL DAY

Hon. John Milloy: It's an honour for me to speak on behalf of the government on the occasion of Holodomor Memorial Day. I too would like to welcome the many visitors we have here at Queen's Park today.

This Saturday is Holodomor Memorial Day, commemorating the 80th anniversary of the deliberate starvation and murder of millions of Ukrainians in the years 1932 to 1933. It is a day of remembrance, a time to commemorate all those who were victims of the catastrophic famine known as Holodomor.

Holodomor was a man-made famine imposed by dictator Joseph Stalin's regime as a means of establishing control over Ukraine. It was an atrocity. Farms were seized. Crops and livestock were confiscated. People were prevented from migrating from famine-affected areas. At its peak, an estimated 25,000 Ukrainians were dying of starvation each and every day. Up to 10 million innocent men, women and children perished.

Raphael Lemkin, the father of the 1948 UN Convention on Genocide, said, "This was not simply a case of mass murder. It was a case of genocide, of destruction, not of individuals only, but of a culture and a nation."

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Today, we pay tribute to the strength and resilience of the people of Ukraine, who endured such hardship and emerged stronger. We salute the courage of the survivors and the descendants and the Ukrainian community here in Ontario and around the world. They fought hard to ensure that the facts of Holodomor were brought to light and acknowledged and that those who died in those terrible times will always be remembered. Our government stands with them and, indeed, I would say all members of this Legislature stand with them.

The Holodomor Memorial Day Act that passed in April 2009 made history in this province when members from all sides unanimously supported it as the first tri-sponsored private bill of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. We joined together, then and now, in collective commitment to raise awareness of Holodomor so such crimes against humanity never happen again.

Education is key to achieving this goal. I know that many members of the community have been working with our government to have the Holodomor made a mandatory part of the high school curriculum here in Ontario. Very soon, every child in Ontario will have the opportunity to learn about the Holodomor and genocide through the new curriculum.

Mr. Speaker, today more than 330,000 Canadians of Ukrainian heritage live in Ontario. We are proud that, over the decades, people from around the world have chosen Ontario as a place of safety, of opportunity and of hope. Even with this diversity, we are one Ontario, a place where we stand firm upon the principle that all people are equal, where we believe in freedom of faith and freedom of expression and value the traditions and beliefs of all. In a complex and sometimes brutal world, at a time when we remember the horrors of Holodomor, these are values to hold dear.

Today, we join with the Ukrainian community in sorrow and in memory of all those who died some 80 years ago. We reaffirm our commitment to freedom and human rights and to fighting human injustice in all its forms.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to rise and welcome our guests to the Legislature here this afternoon on behalf of our leader, Tim Hudak, and the Progressive Conservative caucus in this Legislature.

I rise to speak to a cause that I know, Mr. Speaker, is close to your heart, as it is to many members of this chamber, and that is Holodomor.

From 1932-33, millions of Ukrainians died at the hands of the Stalinist Soviet Union. Holodomor, which translated means "death by hunger," has left a permanent imprint on Ukrainians, not just in Ukraine but here in Canada as well.

The attack on Ukrainian nationalism and Ukrainians led to the starvation deaths of millions of Ukrainians, in addition to deportations, gulags and other atrocities committed by Soviet authorities against Ukrainians. Over

the years, Ukrainians and Ukrainian Canadians have pledged never to forget the suffering that occurred and the lives that were lost. Their lives stand as a lasting memorial to the high price that we all pay when the world turns a blind eye to tyranny, and their contributions to Canada have made us a better nation.

The position of Canada is unequivocal. The Holodomor genocide must be remembered and Canada must act to ensure that such acts cannot be repeated. In 2008, the government of Canada began the commemoration of Holodomor memorial week. In 2009, members of this Legislature came together to pass the Holodomor Memorial Day Act. Frank Klees, our member from Newmarket-Aurora, was one of the initiators of that motion, along with our Speaker, Dave Levac, who was then the member from Brant, and also, from the NDP, Cheri DiNovo. And as we heard, this was the first piece of legislation in the province's history to be introduced with tri-partisan sponsorship.

In 2010, the Prime Minister visited the Holodomor memorial in Kiev, and in September 2010, St. Mary's Ukrainian Catholic Church in Mississauga unveiled a Holodomor memorial to honour the 10 million victims.

Without Ukrainian Canadians, Canada wouldn't be the same. We'd be without Wayne Gretzky. We'd be without Randy Bachman, Alex Trebek and former Premier Ernie Eves. Remember Holodomor this weekend.

Remarks in Ukrainian.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Before I begin, I would just like to ask for a round of applause for you, Mr. Speaker, because it truly was your initiative and it truly was the first tri-party bill. It was my honour and privilege to be part of that initiative. I want to honour you. Thank you.

Applause.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I stand up here every year at this time. To my friends who are sitting here from the Ukrainian community, it's always a difficult place to stand, because we're talking about 10 million lives—lives that could have changed the world, lives that could have made a difference. This truly was—and I think we sometimes gloss over the impact of the word "genocide." The barns were full of wheat. There was lots of food to go around. It just wasn't going to the people in Ukraine.

Something I learned, which is even more damning, in a sense, is the response of the West when it was going on. Malcolm Muggeridge, the journalist, was one of the few, by the way, who wasn't part of that. The New York Times bureau chief, Walter Duranty, called Stalin "the greatest living statesman." He published denials of the Holodomor in the New York Times, and he won a Pulitzer Prize in 1932 for his "dispassionate ... reporting of the news from Russia."

At the same time as the Holodomor was going on, as people were starving, FDR granted US recognition in 1933 for the first time, even though he knew of the atrocities that were going on. This was all happening at the same time. I think that's a lesson to us: that we not turn a blind eye to what is happening in the world around us when it's happening. It's always easy to be courag-

eous after. It's always easy to speak about these things when they're long gone and historical. It's always very difficult to be the voice in the wilderness at the time, saying, "Do something," and there were precious few of those voices. That's something that we should all carry with us as legislators here.

When I think of this issue, I always think of a person, and that person I'll call Mary. Mary died quite a while ago now, but she was a survivor of the Holodomor. I knew her very well. She lived in my riding. She carried a very dark and terrible secret with her all her life; not only that she survived and that her family survived and the horrors of that, but that as a young girl she remembers eating human flesh. I remember her confiding in me about that fact, because that's how horrible it was; that's how terrible it was. The thought of Western journalists travelling around the country, escorted by Russians to show them the wonders of Ukraine and Ukrainian collectivized farming, at the same time that this little girl was doing that, is absolutely astounding. It's absolutely appalling.

To my friends in the Ukrainian community: Another year has passed. I'm so glad to have been a part of finally recognizing this as the genocide that it was. I'm so glad that finally we are going to have it in our high schools. It has taken a lot of work and a lot of effort, and the effort and the work, my friends, are all yours.

Finally, let us give a round of applause for those who made it happen. Thank you very much.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements, and I again welcome and thank our guests for being here.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all rise, with unanimous consent, for a moment of silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Oshawa has requested unanimous consent for us to rise for a moment of silence in honour of and tribute to those lost in the Holodomor. Do we agree? Agreed. Please, all rise.

The House observed a moment's silence.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I thank the member from Oshawa for his kind gesture. I thank everyone for their heartfelt words and commitment.

PETITIONS

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Todd Smith: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn's, Alzheimer's, arthritic diabetes, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is

increasingly endemic in Canada, but scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe; and

"Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of their professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario health insurance plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process of establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives at 45% to 95% of the time;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health to direct that the Ontario public health system and OHIP include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme diagnosis, to do everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed diagnostic and successful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians."

I agree with this petition and will send it to the table with page Morgan.

ONTARIO MUNICIPAL BOARD

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I submit hundreds of names in support of this petition that reads:

"Whereas the Ontario Municipal Board is a provincial agency composed of unelected members unaccountable to Ontarians; and

"Whereas the Ontario Municipal Board has the power to unilaterally alter local development decisions made by municipalities and their communities; and

"Whereas the city of Toronto is the largest city in Ontario; and

"Whereas the city of Toronto has a planning department composed of professional planners, an extensive legal department and 44 full-time city councillors directly elected by its citizens; and

"Whereas Toronto's city council voted overwhelmingly in February 2012 to request an exemption from the Ontario Municipal Board's jurisdiction;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to recognize the ability of the city of Toronto to handle its own urban planning and development; and

"Further, that the Ontario Municipal Board no longer have jurisdiction over the city of Toronto."

I strongly support this petition, Speaker, and I will sign it.

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas small businesses not only employ thousands of Ontarians with well-paying jobs, they also play a vital role strengthening Ontario's economy; and

"Whereas providing tax relief to small and local businesses strengthens the economy and creates a business climate that attracts investment and helps create jobs; and

"Whereas the government has taken several other initiatives to making Ontario the most attractive place to do business in North America;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 105, Supporting Small Businesses Act, 2013, introduced on September 24, 2013, by the Ontario" finance minister.

Mr. Speaker, I fully support it, and I will give the petition to page Payton.

DARLINGTON NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further petitions? The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to present a petition on behalf of my constituents.

"Whereas approximately 20% of Ontario's electricity is produced at the Darlington generating station" in my riding of Durham;

"Whereas in addition to refurbishing the four existing reactors at the Darlington, the building of new capacity is important for the future of Ontario's manufacturing sector and for jobs and investment in our Ontario;

"Whereas a study by the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters in 2012 concluded the building of" two new reactors at the "plant at Darlington would" develop employment for "more than 10,000 people and would support employment for an additional 10,000 others in Canada for approximately a" period of five years;

"Whereas Ontario's Ministry of Energy says Ontario Power Generation has already spent an estimated \$180 million in preparation proceeding" for the new reactors at Darlington;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Ontario's elected MPPs and the provincial government reaffirm their commitment to the complete refurbishment of all four units at the Darlington generating station and that the Ontario government reinstate the original plan for the completion of the two new reactors at the Darlington generating station."

I'm pleased to sign, support it and present it to Najat.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Although the issue has since been resolved, I feel compelled to introduce just a sample of the thousands of names of residents in Windsor-Essex

county who have signed this petition, and over 7,300 who signed the online version. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Cancer Care Ontario has issued a letter threatening to cancel all funding for cancer services if Windsor Regional Hospital does not submit a plan to send thoracic cancer surgery patients to London; and

"Whereas we feel that providing care close to home is the best possible scenario for the patients and loved ones in Windsor and Essex county;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government of Ontario grant Windsor Regional Hospital the same level 2 exemption that has been granted to Kingston and Thunder Bay to continue providing thoracic cancer surgery in our region."

We did it. The pressure outweighed this threat, and the residents of Windsor and Essex county won.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

"Whereas Scarborough residents north of Ontario Highway 401 and east of Don Mills are without a rapid transit option; and

"Whereas a strong transit system is critical for increasing economic development and tackling income disparity; and

"Whereas this geographical area continues to grow and the demand for strong rapid transit continues to increase; and

"Whereas Sheppard Avenue is a major artery for automobile traffic for commuters travelling from suburbs to downtown Toronto, and travelling from suburb to suburb; and

"Whereas ground-level rapid transit would increase traffic, restrict lanes for automobiles, and add further risk for pedestrians and commuters at dangerous intersections along Sheppard Avenue; and

"Whereas demands for underground rapid transit along Sheppard Avenue have been part of public discourse for over 50 years; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario previously approved a plan from the city of Toronto to extend the Sheppard subway line from Downsview to Scarborough Centre; and

"Whereas an extension to the Sheppard" Avenue "subway line will require contributions and co-operation from the city of Toronto, the province of Ontario and the government of Canada;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support the extension of the Sheppard subway line east to Scarborough Centre; and

"To call upon the government of Canada to contribute multi-year funding for the construction and operation of an extension to the Sheppard subway line."

I fully support the petition and I will give my petition to page Niam.

AIR QUALITY

Mrs. Julia Munro: “Whereas Ontario’s Drive Clean Program was implemented as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of ... emissions and smog; and vehicle emissions have declined significantly from 1998 to 2010; and

“Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

“Whereas from 1999 to 2010 the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and

“Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error; and

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program.”

As I am in agreement with this, I’ve affixed my signature to it to give it to page Matteya.

MINIMUM WAGE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s minimum wage has been frozen at \$10.25 an hour since 2010, and some workers earn even less due to current exemptions in the Employment Standards Act; and

“Whereas full-time minimum wage workers are living at nearly 20% below the poverty line as measured by the Ontario government’s low-income measure (LIM); and
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“Whereas minimum wage should, as a matter of principle, bring people working 35 hours per week above the poverty line; and

“Whereas an immediate increase in the minimum wage to \$14 per hour would bring workers’ wages 10% above the LIM poverty line; and

“Whereas raising the minimum wage will benefit workers, local businesses and the economy by putting money in workers’ pockets to spend in their local community;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately increase the minimum wage to \$14 per hour for all workers and thereafter increase it annually by no less than the cost of living.”

I’m going to sign this and give it to Sarah to be delivered to the desk.

WASTE REDUCTION

Ms. Soo Wong: A petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

“Whereas protecting the environment should be everyone’s responsibility, including manufacturing and material producing companies; and

“Whereas it is important to require producers to be financially and environmentally responsible for recycling the goods and packaging they sell in Ontario, and to divert these wastes from landfill to recycling to drive innovation, generate new jobs, and new Ontario-made products; and

“Whereas new approaches are needed that reflect ideas and recommendations from the recycling sector that are designed to improve current recycling systems, to increase recycling and diversion rates, and better protect our environment;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act, 2013, introduced on June 6, 2013, by the Ontario Minister of Environment.”

I fully support the petition. I will give my petition to page Amy.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Ontario’s Drive Clean Program was implemented as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and vehicle emissions have declined significantly from 1998 to 2010; and

“Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

“Whereas from 1999 to 2010 the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and

“Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error; and

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program.”

I agree with this petition and will be passing it off to page Payton.

TAXATION

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have a petition which reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the cost of living in northwestern Ontario is significantly higher than other regions of the province due to the high cost of necessities such as hydro, home heating fuel, gasoline and auto insurance; and

"Whereas an increase in the price of any of these essential goods will make it even more difficult for people living in northwestern Ontario to pay their bills and put food on the table;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To reject any proposed increase to the harmonized sales tax, gas tax or any other fees or taxes in the northwest; and instead investigate other means such as increasing corporate tax compliance or eliminating corporate tax loopholes in order to fund transit in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area."

I support this petition, will affix my signature and give it to page Maya to deliver to the table.

LEGAL AID

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly sent to me by a number of my constituents, actually, in western Mississauga dealing with population-based legal services funding, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas Mississauga Community Legal Services provides free legal services to legal aid clients within a community of nearly 800,000 population; and

"Whereas legal services in communities like Toronto and Hamilton serve, per capita, fewer people living in poverty, are better staffed and better funded; and

"Whereas Mississauga and Brampton have made progress in having Ontario provide funding for human services on a fair and equitable, population-based model;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of the Attorney General revise the current distribution of allocated funds in the 2012-13 budget, and adopt a population-based model, factoring in population growth rates to ensure Ontario funds are allocated in an efficient, fair and effective manner."

I'm pleased to sign and agree with this petition, and to send it down with page William.

DARLINGTON NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present another petition from this young constituent of mine, Trent Angiers, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas approximately 20% of Ontario's electricity is produced at the Darlington generating station;

"Whereas it was Premier Wynne who cancelled the new build at Darlington, costing Ontario 20,000 direct and indirect jobs associated with the new build" of the nuclear plant;

"Whereas this severely limits employment opportunities for university graduates from the University of

Ontario Institute of Technology" and other universities "who were to gain experience in Darlington nuclear's training centre;

"Whereas in addition to refurbishing the four existing reactors at Darlington the building of new capacity is important for the future of Ontario's manufacturing sector and for jobs and investment in our Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Ontario's elected MPPs and the provincial government reaffirm their commitment to the complete refurbishment of all four units at the Darlington generating station and that the Ontario government reinstate the original plan for the completion of the two new reactors at the Darlington generating station."

I'm pleased to sign and support this and send it to the table with Ana, one of the new pages here.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. The time for petitions has expired.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

FISCAL TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY AMENDMENT ACT (PRE-ELECTION REPORTS), 2013 LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA TRANSPARENCE ET LA RESPONSABILITÉ FINANCIÈRES (RAPPORTS PRÉÉLECTORAUX)

Ms. Scott moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 126, An Act to amend the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, 2004 / Projet de loi 126, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2004 sur la transparence et la responsabilité financières.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm happy to discuss my private member's bill here today. The bill is titled the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Amendment Act (Pre-Election Reports), 2013. It sounds like a bit of a boring title, so I'll try and spice it up as I go through, but I strongly believe that this bill will speak to all Ontarians.

I'm sure many Ontarians would be surprised to know that currently the Ontario government is under no legal obligation to release a report on the province's finances before the next fixed election date, which is 2015—probably some of them don't know that there's a fixed election date in 2015. I would also bet that most Ontario voters have no idea that if an election were to be called in, say, the springtime, the government would not be under any legal obligation to produce a report on what the current state of Ontario's finances are. So my goal here today is to bring to light the current loophole that

exists and present a plan that I have to fix this loophole and ensure that Ontarians are sufficiently informed on the state of the province's financial situation before they do head to the polls.

As it stands, there is a loophole in the current legislation that would allow for the provincial government to not provide a financial statement for the fixed election of 2015, or for an election on a non-fixed date. That means, for example, if the NDP were to stop propping up the Liberals and allow the people of Ontario to go to the polls as soon as possible in the spring, the Liberals would not have to release a report documenting Ontario's finances. This seems pretty shocking, but I have a plan to close this loophole and bring back transparency and accountability to the province's finances.

Interjections.

Ms. Laurie Scott: See? I spiced it up a little bit, anyway. They're getting excited over there.

Bill 126, the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Amendment Act, is going to be beneficial for every Ontarian, but let me quickly explain what it is that this bill will do. This bill has two main concepts, in that it will amend the original Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, 2004. I will now provide a brief background of what this bill will do if approved by this Legislature today and, hopefully, subsequently get to third reading and have royal assent.

In subsection 10(1) of the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, 2004, there is a requirement that the Minister of Finance release a pre-election report about Ontario's finances in such circumstances and by such deadline as provided for in the regulations. So section 10 will be amended as follows:

"1. In every year in which there is a fixed date for a general election, the ministry is required to release a pre-election report no later than 30 days after the minister moves the budget motion in the year."

"2. If a writ is issued under the Election Act for a general election other than a fixed date general election, the minister is required to release a pre-election report no later than seven days after the writ is issued" or the day the election is called.

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Subsection 10(3) of the act currently requires the Auditor General to review pre-election reports on a prompt basis. Amendments provide that the Auditor General, an officer of the Legislature, is required to promptly review a pre-election report that is released in connection with a fixed date general election. With respect to a pre-election report that is released after a writ is issued—the day the election is called—the Auditor General is required to review the report within a reasonable time.

Basically, we just want to be able to close this loophole so that we can all know just what kind of shape our financial situation is in before the voters of this province decide whether or not the current government is fit to continue to run this province. We all know just how important it has become that this Liberal government provides us with transparency on our finances and be held accountable for the current economic state we are in.

It's quite evident that the Liberal government of the past decade has been anything but transparent when it comes to taxpayers' finances. I'm going to list some examples of situations that have occurred that Ontarians know and remember.

Over \$2 billion is the actual amount that was spent, and probably mostly wasted, on supposed consulting contracts through the eHealth scandal, in which no material on the wasted money was released until the very same Auditor General I speak of released an investigative report on the debacle. It was a bombshell for Ontarians, and the current Premier was part of the Liberal government that allowed this to happen.

We soon forget just how wasteful this eHealth scandal was for the Ontario people, but it is important that we do not forget the lack of accountability and transparency that took place with this debacle—\$2,700 a day on consultants, consultants charging to watch an eHealth episode on TVO's *The Agenda*. There were even members of the Ministry of Health who were against the Auditor General, thwarting his efforts to get investigators into the ministry for a routine audit in the summer of 2008. Premier Wynne again supported a government that clearly did not show any sort of accountability or transparency with taxpayers' dollars.

Oversight of Omge has been another misfire by the Liberal government. As we all know, there was little to no accountability taken by the government on this program. Heavily bloated, million-dollar-plus salaries, plus contracts worth over \$6 million were being awarded to a for-profit arm of the group that has been investigated.

As well, provincial Auditor General Jim McCarter released a report at the time that heavily criticized the provincial government for lack of oversight of Omge's operation. The report details that the government paid Omge \$700 million over five years and that Omge also borrowed an additional \$300 million for aircraft purchases. The report details how air ambulance costs increased 20% while transporting 6% fewer patients. This demonstrates again the lack of transparency this current Liberal government has displayed with regard to some of the public organizations.

Earlier this year, it was discovered that Dr. Chris Mazza received \$4.6 million, in public dollars, in his last two years at Omge, including, of course, salary, bonuses, cash advances and two housing loans—it seems absolutely ridiculous. There is still an ongoing police investigation that's occurring because of this scandal—the member from Newmarket–Aurora has done an outstanding job on this file. The Premier has kept pretty quiet about this, but this again is why we need more transparency and accountability.

I don't think any of us are forgetting the most recent gas plant scandals, where the true cost of the cancellation of the gas plants in the greater Toronto area was revealed. Again, it wasn't until the Auditor General's report came out a few weeks back that we really got to find out the true cost. We were saying it for months before, but the

Auditor General brought out the true cost of the seat-saver mechanism, and that's exactly what it was; it was a political decision to save Liberal seats.

It's easy for the Premier to say how she is making accountability a foremost priority with her government and how she feels she's being very transparent by calling in the Auditor General to conduct such an investigation, but wouldn't a truly transparent Premier have given us the actual numbers at the beginning of her leadership? She estimated that the cost of the cancelled plants was only going to be \$40 million. Why was she giving us that number in the first place, if she needed an Auditor General's report to come out months later on the true cost of the gas plants?

Premier Wynne, again, was a cabinet minister at the time of the cancellations, and signed the document to allow the cancellations to go forward—again, examples of the need to be truly transparent with the financial dealings of this province, which is with our money, lest we forget that.

This government has really become a panel government. While it may seem like they are being transparent, I think we have 37 panels now. What concrete action has this government taken with the many different panels? She has been making panels to study what her other panels have come up with. This shows that the Premier does not want to find the answers out herself; she just wants to create a panel trail that may someday provide us with concrete solutions and new ideas.

This week, we discussed horse racing and the Slots at Racetracks Program. We debated it in the Legislature. Recently, the Liberal government boasted of the \$400 million that it will be infusing into the horse racing industry. They're trying to do it as a feel-good story to try and make the Ontario public forget that the government pretty much shut down the horse racing industry; it's continuing to shut it down.

That horse racing industry and the Slots at Racetracks Program produced for this government over \$1 billion a year in revenue, which they put towards health care and education, and it provided jobs. Now, since this government changed that program, they've already lost 9,000 jobs in the province that have gone. There will be more that have gone. We may be down to eight tracks left, but who knows?

My smaller track, Kawartha Downs, in Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, again, was left high and dry. Will it have even the 20 races the government feels they so generously gave them to run, when they did have 100 races a year?

During a segment on CBC French radio, the Premier admitted that the decision on closing down the Slots at Racetracks Program was not a good decision, but she was, again, at the table when the decision was made. It is devastating, predominantly, rural Ontario.

Instead of taking actions to own up to the mistake and showing the people of Ontario that she really does want to demonstrate accountability, the Premier just keeps providing everyone with more quotes. Actions speak a lot

louder than words; with the minimal action that has been taken to remedy the drastic situation with the horse racing industry, there does not seem to be any accountability by the Liberal government as to owning up to the downfall of that industry.

The people of Ontario want to have some sense of trust in their government when it comes to being fiscally responsible with taxpayers' dollars. I've read a list of the Liberal government's accomplishments in failing to be transparent and accountable. This little accountability for many misspending bungles—it takes 37 panels for the government to make any sort of claim as to what went wrong in a certain policy or procedure.

That's why this government needs to quickly review and pass my proposed legislation. The Premier says, "Share with us your ideas. Give us your plans." She hasn't taken many of our plans. She has taken a few on the MNR file, actually; I'm quite surprised. But this bill today is an easy fix for something that could become quite a point of reference for many Ontarians as to why they further cannot trust this government—or can trust this government. Just opening the books, seeing where the state of the finances of the province is, having it reviewed by the Auditor General—who, again, I reiterate, is an officer of the Legislature—so that they can verify what the state of the finances is, whether it's early, as in the minority government we're in—it's probably going to be before 2015, but this brings this into legislation.

Many people at home might know that regulations are done by the government. There is no regulation for the upcoming election, either before 2015 or in 2015, so we say: Forget the regulations; bring it into legislation, so it has to be done by all governments who are in power, to be transparent to the people of Ontario.

I look forward to support from all parties today in this Legislature.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Michael Prue: I'm delighted to stand up to speak to this bill and to let my colleague from Victoria-Haliburton-Brock breathe a sigh of relief; I'm standing up to speak in favour of the bill.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you, Mr. Prue.

Mr. Michael Prue: Okay. I do want to tell her that I have some considerable, significant problems with the bill, but my reason for support of this particular bill is that I believe that governments of all stripes—governments in this Legislature, governments in cities, towns and villages across this province and, I dare say, governments in Ottawa—all need to find themselves more transparent and open to the people, particularly in times of election or when we're getting close to elections.

1400

This bill is obviously a correct bill, but it is fraught with problems, and I want to describe some of those problems, which hopefully, should it go to committee, can be resolved, because we need to resolve them if the bill is going to have any chance whatsoever of success.

The current bill requires that the ministry, six weeks prior to the election date, which is set if there's a majority government, must provide all of the documents and details to the Auditor General. The Auditor General then has six weeks to review and to produce a report. So if you look at both of those, the time it takes the ministry to produce and the time it takes the auditor to present a report to the House, that's a total of 84 days. I would hazard a guess, given the complexity of government and the many things that the Auditor General has to look at, that this is a time that's absolutely necessary in order to do the job right.

If the government is defeated in a confidence vote, in a minority situation—and we are in that minority situation. We go through this confidence vote once a year, or actually twice a year, both in the spring: the first on a supply motion and the second on a budget—

Hon. Liz Sandals: And possibly three, if there's a speech from the throne.

Mr. Michael Prue: And possibly three; that's right. There's a third one, but we're not likely to see a speech from the throne before—so there's only probably two opportunities this spring for this to happen. That is a realistic possibility—not a probability, but a possibility—of what might happen this coming spring.

If the government is defeated on a confidence vote, an election generally takes place within 28 to 30 days. So you go from a period of 84 days, under the current legislation, down to a period of 28 to 30 days from the defeat of the government to the time of election.

This is why the NDP chose a different route in the last budget. We chose the route of demanding a Financial Accountability Officer, because that officer, if in place, will talk to this Legislature every single day of the year and will tell us when the government is on track or off track on its projections and whether or not the spending is in accordance with what has been passed in this Legislature.

Now, we know the history of this place, and I know why the honourable member is putting forward this bill. She has been around nearly as long as I have—probably longer—in this Legislature. But when in politics a long time, you start to see things that rankle. It rankles you even when you're in government, and it rankles you especially when you're in opposition, and I dare say it rankles you even more when you're outside this room and you are in the general public and you are watching what's happening and you're frustrated about the things that have been said that aren't necessarily true.

I think the two most grievous things I have seen in my time here, or slightly before my time here: the balanced budget of the Harris government that was just after my arrival, and once the new government came into place—and I have no reason to doubt them, and the auditor confirmed it—there was a \$6.5-billion deficit.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Actually, \$5.6 billion.

Mr. Michael Prue: Sorry, \$5.6 billion. I got myself—thank you. I don't want to expand it any more than it is: \$5.6 billion.

The auditor confirmed that amount of money, and the auditor was very clear and succinct in how that money was sort of hidden from public view. You go into an election and you announce everything is rosy, and then you find out the same is not true. And I remember the same thing—at least I've been told this anecdotally by my colleagues who have been around the NDP a long time. The same thing was true of the Peterson government when Bob Rae came into office and found out that it wasn't quite as rosy as was said and that a deficit was running huge, even before the NDP took office.

Then I noticed, again with the Liberals, that the government said all these things about a gas plant, about \$40 million, and led us for months and months and months around this charade of it being \$40 million. In fact, it wasn't \$40 million; it was \$1.1 billion once the auditor got hold of it and we actually had a look and the people of Ontario could decide what the reality was. So that's why we want a Financial Accountability Officer.

The reality, though, when it comes down to this—and I want to leave plenty of time for my colleague—is that “seven days after” may be problematic. We have to work on something. We have to look in committee at how to make that shorter, maybe not after the budget but in advance of the budget. We have to look at some ways of doing it.

We think, as well, that the auditor needs to be hired as soon as possible. People in this province are tired of waste. They're tired of statements which cannot stand the test of time or veracity once they're looked at. We think a Financial Accountability Officer is the real answer, and I admonish my colleagues, if I may be so blunt, for not putting forward a representative to find a Financial Accountability Officer. Certainly they may have done so this afternoon, but up until this morning, some six weeks after the Speaker asked us to do it, neither one of the other parties have done so, and I think that needs to happen.

Interjection: The Liberals did it.

Mr. Michael Prue: The Liberals did it this morning? Maybe after question period.

Interjection: Yes.

Mr. Michael Prue: Okay, maybe after question period, but as of this morning, they hadn't done it.

I just want to close and leave the rest of the time for my colleague. We're going to support this bill. It has some obvious problems, but we need to shine the full light of day on the budget so that all of the parties going into an election can comment on it but also can put forward realistic suggestions in their platforms, knowing what the actual state of the budget and the province is. With that, I leave the rest of my time to my colleague when the rotation comes around.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It's a pleasure for me to stand in my place today to speak for a few minutes regarding Bill 126, and I'm happy to be sharing my time with my colleague from Mississauga—Streetsville.

I did listen very closely to the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, who has sponsored this particular bill. I also, of course, listened closely to the member from Beaches-East York with respect to his comments. I think there are just a couple of things that I did want to mention.

The member from Beaches-East York did reference some of the stuff that, as he put it, rankles him about stuff that we hear both in this place and outside of this place. I think it's important, because I know there are a number of people in my riding who perhaps were not paying close attention to politics back in 2002, 2003, 2004—frankly, many people in my own family who were not of voting age back in 2003 and 2004—many of whom may be watching the proceedings here today and may have heard the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock speak very earnestly about why having more fiscal accountability and transparency is a good thing.

Of course, in virtually every opportunity that I've had to speak in this House since arriving here last September, I have also echoed many of the comments. That's why I was proud to stand and debate budget 2013 and some of the other elements of that, whether it was any of the pieces of legislation that may have flowed from that particular budget, including the creation of the fiscal accountability office. And to the member from Beaches-East York, the Premier yesterday, during question period, did very clearly state that I have the privilege of serving as the member of our caucus on the Speaker's committee regarding establishing some of the guidelines around what that particular office will look like.

But, Speaker, going back to the importance of making sure, because as has been said many, many times in the past by others, if you're not aware or respectful of history, what has taken place before, you are often doomed to repeat it. I think it's really important. I know the member from Beaches did reference this, but I think it's really important to recognize that in 2003, the Ontario PC Party—many of the members who served in that government still serve in this chamber today, including the current leader of Her Majesty's official opposition. As the member from Beaches said, that was a party where, after the 2003 election was done, when the books were opened to the former auditor of the province, Mr. Peters, it became very clear that there was a \$5.6-billion deficit, as was referenced. But more than just the deficit, I want to draw folks' attention to the fact that Mr. Peters, the former Provincial Auditor, in doing his work, said, in an article that appeared in the *Globe and Mail* on October 30, 2003, that "the Tories, in their zeal to make the budget balance as required by Ontario law, manipulated figures to ensure revenue appeared to match expenditures."

There are a number of other quotes that appeared that Mr. Peters gave back at that time to very clearly demonstrate that though the member from that caucus is standing here in her place today and talking in very effusive terms, in a very energetic way, about the importance for transparency and accountability, it's unfortunate

that many of her colleagues who continue to serve in this chamber cannot make that same claim.

Speaker, in terms of some other quotes, as I was looking through my notes—things that I like to consider some of the greatest hits, so to speak—*Globe and Mail*, May 17, 2003, the former leader of that party, the former Treasurer of Ontario, Mr. Ernie Eves: "We are not running a deficit. We have balanced the books of this province for four consecutive years and we're working on the fifth one."

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Mr. Jim Flaherty, who served in this place at that time and today is Canada's Minister of Finance, told the North Bay Nugget that he insisted "that the Tories remain committed to a balanced budget." That was on September 12, 2003. The list goes on.

But I want to point out another, I think, classic one that's very important to make mention of here today so folks watching in my riding and in ridings across the province understand very clearly that Tim Hudak himself, the leader of that party, said on October 1, 2003, in an interview with the *Dunnville Chronicle*, "The provincial budget has been balanced for the past four years, with a fifth to come."

It's also interesting to note that because of the experience that this government, our government, had back in 2003, and because of the outrage that people from all across the province of Ontario felt about how they were misled by a previous government, that upon taking office, we introduced legislation to try to fix this problem. We're kind of discussing an element, or offshoot, of that legislation from back in 2004.

Speaker, at that time, as you may recall, my predecessor, the former member from Vaughan, was also serving as the finance minister of Ontario. He brought forward third reading of the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act on Thursday, December 16, 2004. Fortunately, because of the hard work of the team on this side, this particular bill passed at third reading, and that's why we have more transparency and accountability around the province's books today than ever before.

But, interestingly, when I look at the notes for who voted that day—who voted in favour and who voted against—it's interesting to note that the following members who currently serve in the Ontario PC caucus, served back then and serve today, voted against the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act in 2004: the member from Newmarket-Aurora, the member from Oshawa, the member from Halton, the member from Simcoe North, the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, the member from Simcoe-Grey, the member from Durham, the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, the member from York-Simcoe and today the leader of the official opposition, the member from Niagara, voted against the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act back in 2004.

I believe, if my notes are correct and my records are correct, that there were a number of members from the NDP caucus serving in this place at that time in 2004

who also voted against this bill, the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act in 2004—I hate to say it—including the member from Beaches–East York himself, who voted against this bill, as my records indicate from 2004, a bill that was designed to do nothing other than ensure that going forward no government—not a Liberal government, not an NDP government, not a Tory government—could ever do what the previous Conservative government had done to the people of Ontario, which was to head into an election campaign and not be forthright and not be honest with the people of Ontario about the state of the province's books. So it is interesting to hear the discussion today.

Of course, everyone on this side of the House believes in the importance of transparency and fiscal accountability. That's why I think we're going to take a longer look at this particular legislation. But I want to make sure that people living right across the province of Ontario who watch the proceedings here today understand clearly that for the last decade and more there is only one party in Ontario that has steadfastly and consistently stood up for and passed legislation regarding fiscal accountability and transparency, and that is the Ontario Liberal Party.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to respond to the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. I commend her for bringing in this particular bill, which is housekeeping in a lot of ways, because of the fact that Premier McGuinty, and now Premier Wynne, were unable to get a clear majority.

Right off the bat, the person who just spoke there from Vaughan—a bit of revisionist history here. I should tell him that the first budget they brought in—first of all, they did not, in that budget, show the transfer payments from the federal government. They also ramped up spending to create a gap in revenue and expenditures, and, in fact, they created the deficit. In fact, had we been the government—and this is the whole point of this openness and accountability. There's no single day that the budget is actually the revenues in line with the expenditures. So you have some wiggle room in how you show those expenditures in the quarter. We just saw the fiscal update the last week or so ago. It showed that the deficit was larger. Now, they could argue that this is a numbers thing, that at this time, these unexpected, unplanned events for expenditures, like the gas plant scandal, the money they've shovelled out for horse racing, all these various things—putting out fires.

What they failed to mention is that there were three things in the final budget of the Conservative government at the time that he did not report on, that were not completed because of the election. Those were the potential sales of assets and other business changes, one of which was the LCBO discussion.

I want the people of Ontario to know that anything the Liberals say you must re-examine and question. Here's the real truth: After that election, Premier McGuinty—here's the real thing viewers should know—promised,

while leaning against a lamp post, "I'm not going to raise your taxes." People might recall that. In the election he promised it.

Now here's the issue; here's the logic. If he promised it, and then he said but he didn't know about this deficit, then he shouldn't have promised. But if he did know, then he lied. Do you understand? That's the issue here.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: He did know. I'm only saying—this is the logic of it. If he didn't know—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'm sure the member knows about parliamentary language, so I'll ask you to withdraw.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'll withdraw that remark, respectfully. But the truth is the truth, and it will set you free.

Here's the issue, though—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): You can't say the same thing in a different way. I ask you to withdraw again.

Mr. John O'Toole: Withdraw. Thank you.

I always believe in the numbers, so really, at the end of the day, these numbers speak for themselves, and the people of Ontario know. Where is Ontario after 10 years? Probably, I'd say, \$14 billion is the deficit. We're heading down the same road as Bob Rae and Floyd Laughren, and I'm tell you—ask yourself in Ontario.

The budget is up about 70%; the debt has doubled. All this government has done is increase spending and increase taxes. There's a couple of bills here today that will bring a little more focus to how bad it is in Ontario.

Just the electricity—look at your electricity bill. Citizens of Ontario, not just in Durham riding but across Ontario, look at your electricity bill. It's the highest in North America, our electricity.

A once-great province—last week, Heinz, the company—everybody uses Heinz ketchup, okay? It's closed. Eight hundred families, just a few weeks before Christmas, are out of jobs. The Ring of Fire, the largest resource-based industry in Ontario: The major investor, Cliffs, just pulled out of Ontario.

It's very discouraging for young people because there are no jobs of any magnitude today in Ontario, especially for young people. I look at the pages here, and I think the future isn't as bright as it once was. I think the main cause—not the only cause—is the lack of management by a government that's riddled with scandals.

I've only got a minute or so left, so I want to list some of the scandals. I think the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock did mention them. She mentioned the idea of the gas plants that's been all over the map, all over, and Ornge helicopters came up, the eHealth scandal. The scandals are really their litany and their record. It's clear that this is a scandal-ridden government.

Ms. Wynne, the Premier of Ontario, is running down the road in the advertisement saying, "I'm going to do things differently." Well—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. I've listened to you carefully. It's been two minutes, and you're not speaking to the bill. I would ask you to refrain from all those comments and speak to the bill.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm going to address that bill, Bill 126, right at this moment because what it does—the last time the thing came in here, the one done before the 2011 election. In that, do you know what the auditor said about their plan? It was aggressively optimistic. That's from the auditor: "aggressively optimistic." What did it do? That's another way of talking about the truth, aggressively optimistic, and numbers. Is that permissible? That's what the auditor said.

I'm looking forward to them voting for this bill or not voting for the bill, because right now Ontario is in big trouble.

1420

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a very interesting place to be, getting up and talking in this House about this motion that has been brought forward by the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

I have to fundamentally disagree with the member from Durham, though. He says that this is housekeeping. Actually, it isn't because it's addressing a gap in accountability, which is why we will be supporting it. We're supporting it because we've been trying to raise the accountability benchmark in this House for quite some time—actually, since we've been in a position to do so.

I do want to address the comments that have been made by the member from Vaughan. He says that we didn't originally support the Liberals' call for accountability way back in 2003. I think it's because we didn't have party status. Is that right?

Interjection: That's correct.

Ms. Catherine Fife: And that side of the House wouldn't recognize the duly elected members of this side of the House. Because they didn't recognize us, we didn't support what they were doing.

Fortunately, we had momentum. Our leader was elected, and we had 10 members, and then we had official party status. Then I guess, we could officially participate in these events and these debates about democracy and about accountability. Fortunately today, we're at 20 members, which I think is a very good sign for the people of the province of Ontario, because we have been steadfastly, with great discipline, addressing issues of accountability, at committee, through our private members' bills and in this Legislature through debate. We are actually trying to shift the culture of accountability in this place. It's a long time overdue.

The member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock clearly has brought forward this motion because there are some serious trust issues. While she was fairly disparaging against us during her comments about how we have participated in the democracy of the minority government that was elected by the people of this province,

while we have tried to be respectful of that minority status and this democracy and this minority government by ensuring that with every budget we secure concessions that serve the people of this province, while she ignores the fact that they have done nothing for two years through two budget sessions, not even reading the budgets before they agree to not support them—while she has said that and while she ignores that, we have at least brought some accountability measures with each budget motion, and those are issues of confidence.

And who knows? Given the Heinz situation, given the Ring of Fire—I have to say, my own personal view is that the Liberals are just not making it easy, quite honestly. We come to the table and we come to work every day; we try to raise the bar on a number of issues, and we bring forward progressive ideas. Sometimes they listen; sometimes they don't. Fortunately, they did on youth employment, on home care.

The Financial Accountability Officer is a major concession that we won in the last budget. It took the Liberals a long time to bring forward a name. Thankfully, we have that name. We got it yesterday when we raised it in question period. That's actually sort of how democracy works.

The third party in this Legislature has that ability to almost shame the Liberal government into doing the right thing, almost shame them into doing what they said they were going to do in the first place, hold them to account for some of those promises on home care, on youth employment, on ODSP and a whole host of numbers, child care, fair taxation. This is what we come to work every day to do.

We have a track record, and thankfully, it has paid off. In the last seven by-elections, we have been able to go to the people and say, "This is our record." This party, the PCs, have no record.

But today, on this motion, because the Liberal government for so long has ignored the fact that this is a minority government—in fact, even when they got elected in 2011, they called themselves the "minor majority" or something ridiculous like that—

Mr. Michael Prue: Major minority.

Ms. Catherine Fife: —major minority. They didn't want to accept the fact that now there is truly a balanced approach. There is a balanced approach in this House, and the third party now has the ability—we are empowered not only by numbers but also by our willingness to come to this place and get some work done. We will be supporting this motion because it addresses a minority situation, something the Liberals do not want to address. Yet here we are today making a difference for the people of this province. We look forward to the vote and the record on this vote later on today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's always a pleasure to join the debate from my colleague from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, who was elected the same year that many of us were: in 2003. Although it's a bit of a Progressive

Conservative “*mea culpa*” bill for many of the reasons that others have stated and that I’ll recap a little bit, I do appreciate the spirit in which it is brought out.

The spirit in which it is brought out really reflects some of the paradigms in which my Conservative members operated in the days when they were in government. At that time, up until about 2004, when the government passed the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, you could ask yourself, “Who gets to see the books? Do ordinary MPPs get to see the books?” In their era, no, they didn’t. “Surely the Leader of the Opposition would get to see the books.” Actually, no, he doesn’t. I was asked this many times by people who said, “You must have known that there was a \$5.6-billion deficit. You must have known it.” I said, “The Leader of the Opposition has no more ability to see what the true state of the province’s books is than you do.” That’s why the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act was passed.

When it was passed, we had just come through such things as budgets that were balanced by selling Highway 407; let’s face that. Then there was the Magna budget that wasn’t even done in this Legislature, on which the Speaker of the day admonished the government of the day and said, “How dare you present a budget anywhere other than the Legislature?” Of course, my colleagues have pointed out the \$5.6-billion deficit.

Clearly the member recognizes that there’s nothing better than transparency. In this respect, I must agree with my colleague from Beaches–East York, who said the same thing. What we really do aspire to as members of this House is a budget process that’s clear, that’s fair and that’s transparent. I would say to you that if you look at the government’s budget, you’re seeing the true state of Ontario’s finances at that point in time. If you look at the fall economic statement, certainly in the years since we’ve been in government, you’re seeing the true state of Ontario’s finances at that point in time.

What the member asks for is actually something that—I can appreciate the sentiment. She’s saying, “In the event that there is an election that is called outside the time in which elections are normally scheduled”—because this deals with what, I will freely admit, is a weakness in the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act: that it operates on a majority-government four-year cycle. It says to the auditor, “At a time before the parties begin their deliberations and make their assumptions for a campaign, tell everybody what the true state of Ontario’s books is.”

The assumption in that is that the budget won’t tell the true state of Ontario’s books. I’ve just gotten through saying that since 2003, Ontario’s budget will give you the true state of Ontario’s books and a view looking forward for four years, which was the intent of our first Minister of Finance, Greg Sorbara, and his successors, Dwight Duncan and my colleague from Mississauga South. This is a philosophy to which we adhere. It’s also good business, and it’s the same discipline that you would find in the private sector. If you’re in the private sector and you’re a publicly traded company—and there

is no larger publicly traded company in this province than the government of Ontario—you have your books audited, and the auditor would publish the true state of your company’s books. We do that when we do the budget, and we have this extra set of checks and balances in the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act.

The member says, “As an extra measure, shouldn’t we enable this to be done before an election, no matter when the election is called?” I appreciate the sentiment. From the standpoint of workability—a point raised by my colleague from Beaches–East York—I don’t think the time that she has put into this is workable and realistic from the vantage point of the auditor.

I appreciate the sentiment in which she has raised the issue. I think this matter deserves a little more serious study. I thank you for the time, Speaker.

1430

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I’m pleased to be able to rise this afternoon and speak in support of the private member’s bill put forward today by my colleague the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. Bill 126, the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Amendment Act, deals with the government’s responsibility to make public a formal report on the state of the government’s finances at election time.

The current act does not require such a financial update from a minority government. That means that, if this bill is passed, it would require that, after the election writ is dropped, the government has to produce the economic update report within seven days, well before election day.

This is a good bill, with all the merits to attract the full support of all parties in the House. The bill is particularly timely and necessary given the prospect in a minority government of an election at any given time, as well as the government’s actions over their 10 years in government.

We know we can’t trust what this government says, whether it’s who made a decision, whose responsibility it is, what actually happened or how much something cost in the past, the present or the future. The government’s scandals have broken the public trust, and it has lost the moral authority to govern.

Transparency and accountability are in demand, although they are in short supply here at Queen’s Park, no matter how many panels the government chooses to strike or claims it makes to the contrary.

The Premier and the other members of the cabinet have not addressed this bill. They, and members this afternoon, have tried to deflect attention from their own lack of conduct by telling stories about the past, tall tales of events from 10 years ago when they took the reins and began paving the path to lost prosperity.

This Premier stood in her place Tuesday, accusing us of holding a \$5.6-billion budget deficit in 2003. The truth of the matter is quite different. I was a sitting member at the time, and I remember it well. The 2003 budget was introduced in March, and it was balanced.

As with any budget, of course, my colleagues will agree that spending and revenue projections are fluid and must be reassessed at points throughout the year. Since the government rose in June and the election was held in October, it was impossible for, frankly, any government to give a budget update with revised projections before the election.

I want to speak to a couple of points that others have made with regard to the fact that it was hidden. I recall quite clearly the former member, the finance critic for the Liberal Party of the day, Gerry Phillips, asking if this was a balanced budget. It also came up in estimates, which, by the way, would answer the member from Mississauga—Streetsville on where the numbers are; the numbers are published every year, and they are in estimates.

But the question, then, about whether this was hidden from people is totally erroneous. In many places in Hansard, you will see where the answers were provided. Based on the economic impacts of the world at the time, and local events such as SARS—SARS, by the way, cost the Ontario taxpayer \$1.3 billion, and that was certainly well beyond the projected estimates of the budget in its original review.

There were many contributing factors, and all parties went into the election with economic plans acknowledging a projected deficit of at least \$2 billion. You can go to Hansard and you can find the evidence where both the NDP and the Liberals recognized the \$2 billion.

Right after the election, the then auditor, Mr. Erik Peters, produced a report on Ontario's economy. Mr. Peters did identify a \$5.6-billion budget deficit, but that deficit would be at a fiscal year-end in March if the government did nothing in response to the conditions experienced by Ontario's economy in the second half of the 2003 budget year.

The government went further down the road of hyperbole and misrepresentation when the Premier directed the auditor to ignore the anticipated federal government's spending announcement of \$771 million that would obviously reduce the budget liabilities within that year.

First, the Liberals knew there would be at least a \$2-billion deficit when they went knocking on doors, campaigning for election.

Second, the deficit when the Liberals took office was not \$5.6 billion.

Third, there were no clandestine schemes to hide any budget shortfall that year. The timing of the election made it impossible to appropriately revise the budget forecast.

The importance of transparency and accountability remain today as one of the paramount features of government.

I think it's appropriate to jump ahead and look at what the privacy commissioner said about this government when reviewing their email scandal around the cancellation of the gas plants: "In this day and age, ignorance is no excuse."

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, you have two minutes for a response.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I want to thank the member from Beaches—East York and the member from Vaughan for speaking today. I think that some of the rebuttal has been given to their comments by the member from Durham, who correctly said, when we had the 2011 pre-election report, the Auditor General said there was a structural deficit and that the Liberals were aggressively optimistic in their numbers. We've seen in the fall economic statement the fact that the government even refused to provide the additional three-year spending and revenue outlook in their statement in order to try and hide the true impact of what's happening in our economy, and that their numbers are nowhere near being on track in their promise to balance the budget for 2017. This is further proof of why we need this bill to go forward today.

The members from Kitchener—Waterloo, Mississauga—Streetsville and York—Simcoe, I was pleased to have your input on the debate. The member from York—Simcoe gave some vivid factual information about the occurrences in 2003, and I hope that the members opposite—they seem to be upset about that, but that is on record many times, and she can prove it.

I will just say that at least my bill is proposing that the Liberal government have the ability to display what they've actually done with the taxpayers' hard-earned money. You'll have to display just how helpful you claim to be for the people of Ontario. We're still working through the post-2008 economic scene where we've seen much lower growth than what was expected in your projections before the 2011 pre-election campaign.

The Premier has the OPP anti-rackets squad knocking at her door. Ornge is still under investigation by the OPP. "Liberal Party" and "transparency" are words that have not gone well together recently because of the usual lack of transparency. I'm trying to help them out with a bill that would provide transparency.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll take the vote on this item at the end of regular business.

ENERGY CONSUMER PROTECTION AMENDMENT ACT (ELIMINATION OF FIXED RATE ELECTRICITY CONTRACTS), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION DES CONSOMMATEURS D'ÉNERGIE (ÉLIMINATION DES CONTRATS DE FOURNITURE D'ÉLECTRICITÉ À TARIF FIXE)

Ms. Campbell moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 132, An Act to amend the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010 to eliminate fixed rate electricity contracts between retailers and consumers / Projet de loi 132, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2010 sur la protection des consommateurs d'énergie pour éliminer les contrats de

fourniture d'électricité à tarif fixe entre détaillants et consommateurs.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I'm very pleased to rise and begin the debate on my first private member's bill—two years after being elected, but still, I'm happy it's here: Bill 132, which is short-titled the Energy Consumer Protection Amendment Act (Elimination of Fixed Rate Electricity Contracts), 2013.

1440

I wanted to start by providing a bit of an overview of how we came to have the problem we have today with electricity retailers. During the period of market deregulation that occurred in the industry at the beginning of the previous decade under the PC government, electricity retailers were allowed to enter into the electricity system to offer customers the benefits of competition and choice. Although the formation of an open market was eventually abandoned—thank goodness—and regulated electricity rates were retained, electricity retailers continue to do business in Ontario. Under the current system for residential customers, they are, in effect, outliers, and their continued presence affects the entire rate base.

The electricity retailer concept, which was legislated in 5.1 of the Ontario Energy Board Act, provided that in a competitive market, retailers would be allowed to serve consumers by allowing them to pay higher electricity rates in exchange for the price stability and predictability of a fixed contract and what that provides. Retailers could also offer other services such as energy-saving programs, energy audits, equipment maintenance and/or the option to provide a portion of the rate to support renewable energy projects.

After the province turned away from the open market concept, the OEB developed an electricity price plan that provided stable and predictable electricity pricing and ensured that the price consumers pay for electricity better reflected the price paid to generators. So the Ontario Energy Board's regulated price plan, RPP, has, in effect, diminished the need for electricity retailers in Ontario by addressing consumers' desire for predictability in their energy rates. Despite the impact that the RPP has had on the need—or more appropriately, lack of need—for electricity retailers, in recent years, legislation that has come from this government has focused more on retailer practices.

The government's Energy Consumer Protection Act was passed in 2010 as a response to electricity retailers whose business practices were increasingly viewed by the public as questionable. The new rules in the ECPA address some of the most common complaints relating to retailers that the OEB has received, specifically around the provision to customers of copies of their contract and reaffirmation calls, poor business practices and the like.

Retailer practices, such as door-to-door sales and the provision of potentially misleading information to

customers, account for 70% to 90% of complaint calls to the OEB. Customers who have been concerned about rising electricity prices may be signing these contracts with the belief that future higher prices can be avoided by contracting with a retailer, even though most of the projected price increases will be included in the global adjustment—that, of course, is the amount that fluctuates from month to month. Contracts with retailers are typically for the cost of power and may not protect people against increases in delivery, regulatory, global adjustment or other non-energy charges. So, really, people are being sold a false bag of goods.

As a result of the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010, the Ontario Energy Board has expanded its regulatory oversight of electricity retailers. But there have been costs that have been associated with this expansion of their regulatory duties, and this has had an impact on the entire rate base. What it's essentially doing is that because we have some energy retailers who may not be operating in the best faith, that caused the government to react in 2010 by increasing some of the legislative oversight, which is adding more cost to the system, and so we are all paying that, whether we are with an energy retailer or not.

What this bill seeks to do is four things:

—It will disallow further new private fixed-rate contracts for residential customers. Any fixed-rate contracts entered into after the specified date when this act comes into force will be considered void.

—It will also phase out existing retailer contracts with residential customers by allowing them to expire and by not allowing them to be extended beyond the expiration date.

—It will allow private electricity retailing in circumstances where institutional, industrial and commercial customers decide it is in their best financial interest. Again, this piece of legislation only applies to residential customers. It does not apply to any large non-residential customers who may be better suited to make the complex business decisions associated with long-term contracted electricity rates;

—The fourth piece of this legislation is consumer protection. It protects consumers when contracts are entered into after the date that this piece of legislation would take effect, and it would allow people freedom from liability for obligations under their contract, and also a right to a refund if those contracts were entered into after this takes effect.

I wanted to spend a little bit of time explaining why this is an important issue to me personally and also why it's an important issue to the people in Kenora—Rainy River. A few years ago, when I was working for the former MPP, I started to see a steady stream of people who were walking into all three constituency offices, who were just fed up. They were beside themselves. They had received these bills in the mail, their hydro bills, and their already unaffordable hydro bills were just that much more ridiculous. It was something that they couldn't keep up with.

People were signing up for a variety of reasons. It could just be that they had just walked in their doors after a long day at work; they could be on the phone dealing with their kids, making dinner, all of these things. And then, also, I noticed that there was a spike in 2010, right after the McGuinty government announced that they would be raising hydro prices by 46% over the next five years, and that had people terrified, especially in northwestern Ontario where we rely on electricity. It is an essential service for us.

The people who I saw coming through the door really varied. We had a lot of seniors, people on social assistance, people who were receiving ODSP—really, people who were having a hard enough time keeping afloat and paying their bills as it was and didn't really have the luxury of paying extra. We had, as I said, pensioners, and we also had some professionals. You know, I had some physicians who had come in, and they came in pretty sheepishly, saying, "I looked at everything. I thought that I was going to be getting a good deal, and even I couldn't tell, after reading all of this fine print, that I would be stuck with this enormous bill afterwards."

I wanted to highlight a couple of the examples of people who had come in. I had, for instance, a single mother who was told that she had to sign on with the retailer or Hydro One would not supply her anymore. There was a senior in a First Nation community who had no idea what she was signing. There was a woman who was legally blind who was forced to sign a contract. There was a couple living off of workers' compensation and a man living in a First Nation community who was signed up by his mother who was just temporarily staying at his house. A lady living on \$12,000 a year was coerced into signing by a salesperson who scared her when he refused to leave; and a young father was made to believe that the salesperson was from a government agency and that his job was to help consumers find the best energy deals.

Then, of course, I've heard other examples, too, of single women being home alone and having three very large men coming to the house and saying that they would give her a couple of minutes to think about it while they idled outside, which would give anybody cause for concern.

So what happened was I started having some success cancelling these contracts. In some instances, I was able to get people a refund, but, of course, not in enough cases. I also made a concerted effort to host information sessions around the riding and expose some of the tactics that were being used, like sending the cheques in the mail that on the back would say, in very fine print, "By cashing this cheque, you agree to enter into a five-year contract," at such and such a rate, and sending out prepaid MasterCard to people on social assistance right before Christmas. I mean, this is really deplorable stuff.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Unethical.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Yes, very unethical.

So I found that helping people after the contracts were signed was helpful, but the consumer awareness just

wasn't enough. People were still signing up, and that was simply because we just can't reach everybody and let people know about all the tactics. We're still hearing cases of some of these retailers misrepresenting themselves.

Aside from these stories, there are also some other folks who have been talking about electricity retailers and how they aren't necessarily good for Ontarians. An example is, according to the Ontario Auditor General's 2011 report, it was estimated that approximately 15% of the province's customers are currently signed up with a retailer and are paying between 35% and 65% more than customers who are paying their hydro rates with their local distribution companies, and of course, they're not protected from price increases.

As mentioned, having electricity retailers as part of our energy system costs us all more. We've had to increase our resources to police the practices of some of these retailers, and the Electricity Distributors Association has said that phasing out multi-year, fixed-price contracts offered by private electricity retailers for residential customers will save the overall electricity system approximately \$260 million annually, based on a 50% premium, compared to the RPP, the regulated price plan.

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I would be remiss if I didn't mention very briefly that this government did make some changes in 2010 to "crack down" on energy retailers, but those changes really haven't translated to the protection that people are looking for. I've got a list of the top 10 supplier complaints from the Ontario Energy Board that they've received in the last quarter. Despite the changes that were set to deal with these exact things, we're still seeing problems with the general contract; cancellation charges being too high or unfairly applied; reaffirmation—people are declining on the reaffirmation call and still being signed up; misrepresentation of identity; cancellation requests not being processed; no copies of contracts given; contract renewals even after the time that they've been allowed to be renewed; persistent sales tactics; and other problems with verification. There are a number of issues that are not being addressed with current legislation. That is why I believe the only option we have left is to simply ban the sale of fixed-rate electricity contracts to residential customers.

The other thing that I should mention very briefly is that, in all of the people I've talked to across Kenora-Rainy River, I've not met a single person who has entered a contract knowing full well what that contract actually entails and what that's going to mean in terms of their hydro bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I compliment the member for Kenora-Rainy River on her bill. I appreciate what she's trying to do, and I'm going to give a quick anecdote.

Not long after I was first elected, one of these door-to-door peddlers shows up at my place—I had just gotten

home from work—and starts to tell me about what the government is about to do in the electricity sector and about billing whatever it was at the time. I reached in and I pulled out my legislative pass and said, “Oh really? I’m the government. So tell me.” And this guy just turned around and ran. So she’s absolutely right to point out the predatory marketing practices in the electricity retail sector, and on that I commend her.

Now, here’s where I have to differ with her. Instead of taking a very sharp knife to the practices of the industry, in this case she has applied, deliberately or inadvertently, a bit of a sledgehammer. What we really need to have happen is to have predatory marketing practices excised. Instead, the intent of the bill—in fact, the way the bill is irretrievably worded—is to in effect shut down a means of selling a product. In this case, it’s the banning of fixed-rate contracts, which may or may not be the most effective way to better sell electricity. Personally, I wouldn’t sign a fixed-rate contract, and if you’re out there and someone is asking you to sign, my advice to you, as an MPP standing in here, is not to sign. But that said, this futures contract, as it’s called, isn’t something that should arbitrarily be slashed out.

Now, what the member has implied in her bill is that electricity prices have been stable and are likely to remain stable for some time, because if you’re selling a futures contract, what you are saying is, “Buy now and lock in your rate because prices are going to go up.” If you buy on a fixed-cost, go-forward basis, you’re betting that the price will go up and choosing to lock in at a lower price. That’s what the retailers sell.

If you were in the financial world, you’d find that this is a very common practice, and it’s called a futures contract. In fact, among the things you can buy using a futures contract are pork bellies, wheat, iron ore, cotton, precious metals, advertising space, advertising time, freight car capacity and PC Party white papers. But if what you’re looking for is actually something to use in furthering the electricity sector, I might say, “Go after the predatory marketing practices.” I have no trouble with that. But to say that there’s something wrong with the product of selling a futures contract in and of itself, I think, is taking a reasonable objective one step too far in saying the problem is more than with the practices used to sell the product; the problem is the product itself. There may come a time when even the member herself may say, “Well, why can’t we sell electricity on a futures basis?” I have no trouble with your ripping apart the horrible, manipulative means by which futures contracts—in other words, fixed-rate contracts—in electricity are sold, but in and of themselves, the means of selling it remains an option if it’s done responsibly.

That’s my principal objection to it. The province has taken a number of very strong measures to crack down on the abuses that a lot of the vendors have done over the years, such as the member very ably explained. I know my colleagues will be expanding on this in their remarks.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rob Leone: It’s always a pleasure to stand in this Legislature to speak on behalf of the citizens of Cambridge on a topic that I think is on a lot of people’s minds—not specifically, perhaps, this particular bill, but I think I can say with some degree of certainty that hydro costs are among the top issues that our constituents are facing.

This legislation, I would say, is about retroactively voiding any contracts that are signed in the long term. I know that, in this Legislature, when we’re dealing with contracts being signed and then cancelled, there’s always a cost to those cancellations. I know that the bill includes a provision that consumers won’t be adversely affected by the cancellations and the voiding of these contracts, but I would have to say that those folks that have created these contracts and are entered into these contracts—the providers of these fixed-rate contracts certainly, I think, will have some legal case to get some money, at least from the government, if such a bill were to be put in place.

I’m not really sure that the bill incorporates the potential legal ramifications and civil suits that may occur as a result of this. We know what happened with the gas plant cancellations in this province, where \$1.1 billion have been spent simply to cancel power plants. Cancelling those contracts obviously comes with a cost. We don’t know what those costs are going to be because of this bill.

I believe that what this bill intends to do is to talk about how hydro rates should be on the decline. I think families right across the province of Ontario simply want to see those hydro rates go down. I hear that from my constituents every day. What I don’t hear very much—and certainly there are the odd cases of some people who have entered into these contracts—is that banning fixed-rate contracts is actually the solution to lower hydro rates in the province of Ontario. That’s not the case.

Frankly speaking, the reason why our hydro rates have gone up astronomically is as a result of the Green Energy Act. We are spending more and more money for power that we’re not even using. We’re paying the producers of this power excessive amounts of money. We’re throwing water that is going through our hydro turbines through the spillways, not through the turbines, just to ensure that we are able to have a supply that meets demand. We are shutting down nuclear reactors when wind turbines are spinning rapidly at night, when power use and power consumption is low. We are obviously paying for our peaking plants to peak, to mitigate the fluctuation in energy usage and consumption right across the province of Ontario.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, standing order 23(b) requests that the member actually address the subject of the bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Cambridge, if you could just address the bill.

Mr. Rob Leone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the member from Mississauga's interest in listening intently to everything I'm saying.

My point is this: that energy costs have gone up, and I think everyone in this Legislature wants to do something about it. I think the intent of this bill is to try and address the circumstances by which we can actually help families cope with rising energy costs. That's the intent of this bill. That's the intent of this legislation. As I realize that this is where the heart of this bill is coming from, there are better solutions to be had, like modifying and dealing with the rising costs of energy through the Green Energy Act.

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The other thing I want to talk about very briefly—and I know my colleagues want to discuss this bill as well—I know that this bill is simply talking about energy rates as residential energy rates and not business hydro rates. I know businesses are also faced with the problem of fixed-rate hydro as well, and this bill doesn't intend to address those. The global adjustment charges to businesses in my riding, the deposits that our businesses are going to have to pay for hydro rates, for the hydro distribution to come to their premises, are astronomical and are hindering economic development in all communities across the province of Ontario. I think those are ideas that we need to explore and debate, and I would encourage the member, if she's concerned about energy rates, to look at those.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'm honoured to rise and speak for a couple of moments on this important issue. Each and every one of us has constituents who have entered into contracts with these energy marketers come into our offices on a daily basis. Most of these people are smart people. I've had politicians, I've had teachers, I've had factory workers enter into these contracts. They don't enter into them unknowingly. They enter into them because they're coerced into believing that they're actually going to save some money in the process, only to find out later that they're not.

I have one example here, where a former politician—a senior—five years ago actually contacted Direct Energy to cancel his contract that he was in. Five years later, it still wasn't cancelled. So he diligently paid his bills. He finally came into the office one day. We got a hold of Direct Energy. Lo and behold, they had his cancellation contract and they sent him a cheque for \$700 or \$800. So people are being ripped off.

The issue is complicated, because if they're not prepared to cancel the contract, they then put people into collection agencies. Then they've got these people calling them on a daily basis from the collection agencies, harassing them.

I just wanted to quote something that my former member, Peter Kormos, had to say about this issue two years ago. You can see it's long-standing. It never gets addressed; it never gets corrected by this government.

These were his comments on this energy marketing: "One of those companies is Summit Energy Management Inc. on Milverton Drive in Mississauga. Gerry Haggarty of that company shouldn't have 'CEO' after his name; he should have 'Millhaven' or 'Warkworth' after his name, because these guys, in view of what they're doing to Ontarians, belong in jail, not in some fancy office with thick, plush broadloom." And he called upon the government at that time, so more than two years, to have the ministry of consumer protection start protecting consumers in this province instead of marketers.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise and to speak to private members' Bill 132. Let me say from the outset, I'll be supporting this bill, but certainly not without some reservations.

I think that the intent of the bill, as has been previously stated, is a noble one. I think all of us come to this place, and we've got constituency issues to deal with in the riding, and we've got policy issues to deal with in this chamber. Sometimes the two come into conflict. Certainly, I've had enough calls in my constituency over the years, since 2003, to understand that this is an issue that was a very, very serious issue in the past, and remains an issue to this date.

We've made some changes. We've brought in some legislation that has gone, I think, a long way towards solving some of the problems. What it hasn't done, however, is solve all of the problems. I know, even as a consumer myself, I've had some issues with companies like Direct Energy, for example, and some of the marketing practices that they employ. Some of the contracts that they ask people to sign—in my opinion, I've seen better, would be a good way of putting it.

What my concern is is that I've also been a customer of Bullfrog Power in the past, and, in my estimation, what this would do is prevent consumers from signing contracts with Bullfrog Power. That, to me, seems to be casting the net a little wide, far wider than I would want to see it cast.

I'm hoping, if the bill is successful—it sounds like, from what I've heard around the chamber, it's going to be successful. I'm hoping that if it does get to the committee stage, the mover of the motion would be amenable to some amendments that would allow companies, like Bullfrog Power, that I think have done a good job over the years to remain. At the same time, it would send a very, very serious message to the industry that they simply have to clean up their act, or we're prepared to not allow these contracts to exist at all.

Speaker, I'm going to leave it at that. I'm going to let my colleague David Zimmer, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, complete the government's time on this bill. But as I said from the start, I'm going to support it and I'm going to ask that it be sent to committee. Hopefully, some changes can be made there that will improve the bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I first want to compliment the member from Kenora–Rainy River on her first private member's bill. Also, the fact that what motivated her to do it was listening to her constituents who had experienced difficulty with electricity market retailers. I commend you for that. That's a significant attitude that we should all have here, as we're here to work for our constituents. In that respect, I certainly agree with the sentiment of the bill.

But there are things here, though, that I'd have to look at. If you want to really look at the bill itself—and I have taken the chance of taking a couple of my constituents' concerns as well. I actually got my office to send me the bills etc.

Here's really what happens. What I'm hearing from most consumers today is that electricity bills are the highest in North America. It's tragic. The issue of the retailing, fixed rate and all that, is a separate discussion, I guess. Today you're actually paying more for the expenses of line loss, the debt retirement charge, the smart meter—all these other charges. You're paying more for those things than you are for the electrons themselves. So if your bill is \$100, you're paying \$60 for all these other things.

What the Liberals have done recently is they buried it in the price. You can't see those other charges—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member to speak to the bill, similar to what I said to the member for Cambridge. This bill is about contracts.

Mr. John O'Toole: With all due respect, I fully agree. Here's this bill—and you as well must be shocked at the price of electricity, aren't you? I'll leave that with you. In your next intervention, you can probably figure it out.

I have a problem with this, the voiding of a contract. As my colleague from Oxford just said to me—it makes such straightforward sense—a contract that can be voided isn't a contract, so let's put that on the table. What we need to do is educate consumers, and I think that's an extremely appropriate thing. In fact, I think Bill 55 dealt with electricity retailers and people selling hot water.

What we need is a cooling-off period. We need to improve those opportunities for consumers not being too busy and saying, "Sure, I'll sign that." Always be careful what you sign because you end up with consequences for it. So I can't be supportive of that part of the bill. That's the difficulty I'm having here.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to thank the member. That's first. I would say that the member spoke of something else which is important, and these are her remarks that I'm responding to. She said that in 2010, the Liberals introduced changes and announced that there would be a 46% increase in the price of electricity. Isn't that frightening?

Now, I think she's really doing an excellent job here, and I commend her because she's listening to her consumers. I'm looking around, and some of the members here—and there are very few here, I should say. What I'm hearing is it's the most difficult issue families are

facing today. Heaven forbid, as we approach Christmas and other celebrations with the family, and the cold season of the year, you're almost going to have to be shivering in the cold in Ontario. You won't be able to afford it. You can either buy gifts for the children or pay the electricity bill. Whether or not you have a retailer is a whole separate issue, because as the bill points out, the rate itself under the smart meters—this is related, see? It does allow you to budget, having a regulated rate plan. You can budget: "I've only got \$500 a month."

Here's another part. On that \$500 bill for electricity, the Liberals introduced the HST. Now you're paying—listen up, the HST—\$40 more tax—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I come back to the member again. You're straying way off the bill, and I had to do the same with the member for Cambridge.

Mr. John O'Toole: I wouldn't disagree with the Speaker, that's for sure. I would say I'm trying to make the point here that we can't support voiding contracts. I think it would be challenged in the courts. We should protect consumers—a cooling-off period. I'm adamant about that. I listen to my constituents. You know the biggest one I'm getting from my constituents, Speaker? Are you interested in this one? In rural Ontario the smart meters—they spent \$1 billion on these smart meters. They should be put in jail, these guys. The smart meters aren't working if you haven't got—

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Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I've given you three warnings. The next time—

Mr. John O'Toole: It's hard to discuss this bill because I can't support the cancellation of contracts. Now, in the contract, you are freezing the rate. But this is related. I challenge on this point. The rate today is not fixed; it's a variable rate. It's called time-of-use. Time-of-use means that at the high rate it's 10 cents and at the low rate it's 3 cents per kilowatt hour. Now here's the deal: Fixed rate means you're going to pay a fixed rate. That's great, and you're probably going to pay at the highest rate—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. I think I've heard enough of you not speaking to the bill. Further debate? The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Rob Leone: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order.

Mr. Rob Leone: Mr. Speaker, the member from Durham is speaking to the bill. Talking about cancellation costs and talking about hydro in general relates to what we're talking about with this bill. You cannot deny a member the right to talk about this bill when he's speaking exactly to the contents of what we are talking about.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Member for Cambridge, that's not a point of order, and I did warn the member three times.

Further debate? The member for East York.

Mr. John O'Toole: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm putting on the record that I'm asking for my time to represent the views of my constituents on the issue of retailers, and I'm being denied. I believe your decision is wrong and I'm asking the Chair or the Clerk of the Legislature to interpret it for me. These are important components of the rate itself—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would just inform the member that based on our standing orders, you don't have that right. I gave you three warnings to stick to the bill, the content of the bill and the main source of the bill, and you keep straying—

Mr. John O'Toole: You're wrong. I'm sorry, you're wrong.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'd ask you to withdraw.

Mr. John O'Toole: Withdraw.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Member for East York.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Point of order, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: The member from Durham was speaking to the bill. I mean, cancellation costs—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): *[Inaudible]* would you please sit down? The member for East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Is it appropriate for me to speak now? I hope so. I'm going to actually talk about this particular bill. I want to start out by talking about what these retailers are selling. They are selling the cost of the power only. They are not selling or charging for the delivery fee, regulatory cost or the global adjustment. So, what they are charging for is the cost of the power, the electricity, only. When they make that cost and when they're selling that cost, they're selling it at hugely inflated rates.

The hugely inflated rates, as the auditor has told us, are between 35% and 65% more than they can buy it from Ontario Hydro or from any of the other regulators in the province of Ontario. So people need to understand. The people here debating this need to understand that what is being sold is being sold at a price that is enormous compared to what people can buy it at in the ordinary marketplace.

Now, why do people buy this product when they can buy it in the ordinary marketplace for 35% to 65% less? The reality is that they buy it from somebody at the door because they're afraid or because they've been bamboozled or because the person selling it offers them things like credit cards before Christmas or any number of other gimmicks or things that they're doing. It is a dishonest practice that is taking place out there. You need to understand that. Everyone needs to understand it.

I know my friends in the Conservative Party like to stand up for business, even when that business is not particularly ethical, as this one. I know they like to stand up for that because it's a free-market economy and they kind of like it. I will tell you, the reason we're in this

mess with these guys running around isn't so much because of the Green Energy Act; it's because the former governments of Mike Harris and Ernie Eves privatized the electricity system. That's why we're in this mess in the first place. To allow guys to come door to door selling a product that you can buy anywhere else for less cost, and more reliably, is not doing any service at all to the consumers of this province.

If this bill were to pass, it is estimated that the residential consumers of Ontario would save \$260 million annually. Remember that. You have to decide: Do you want the \$260 million going to these guys who go door to door preying on people who don't understand, or do you want the consumers of Ontario to buy it from a reputable dealer authorized by the government and save the money?

I have to tell you, I have seen these guys in operation. I remember—I've told this story in the Legislature before, but it bears repeating—my mother called me in a panic one day from a little town just outside of Bancroft. She had just been bamboozled. My father had signed the form from one of these electricity guys, and she didn't know what to do. She phoned me in a panic. "What can I do? I want to stop him. He won't even come back to the house. I want to rip it up. He won't let me do it." I told her to call the police. God bless her, she called the OPP, who arrived at her door a couple of minutes later. The OPP went around and found the guy who was selling all the stuff—and it wasn't just my mother he sold it to. She lived in a small community full of retirement homes, in a former mining town that had been converted. Almost everybody who lived there was a senior. He had a pocket full of these things, and he used the same high-pressure tactics. The police officer made him go back, door to door, and tell the people that they didn't have to sign it. When the police came back with the guy, the guy did it and he got out of town fast. God bless the OPP for being that fast on that occasion.

In my own case, I answered the door one day in downtown East York, and there was a young guy standing there with a badge, an Ontario plate and all kinds of stuff saying he was from the Ontario government and he wanted to sell me electricity. I looked at him for a second and I asked, "Who are you with?" He gave me the name of some company; I can't even remember it at this time, because he got me so mad after. He said, "It's a deal. The electricity rates are going to go sky-high. You need to protect yourself. We've got a really good offer here." He went on and on. I listened to him for about a minute, and I told him, "I'm not interested." He told me, "You have to be interested." I guess he thought I was a senior or something. He said, "You have to be interested." Finally, I told him, "Sir, I'm not buying your product. In fact, one day I hope to be able to stand up and get rid of you guys altogether"—so that's what I'm doing today. He said, "You can't get rid of us. We're selling a product, and we have a licence." I told him he was preying on the weak and the innocent, and it wasn't going to be me. He took offence at that, and I told him to get off my porch and get

off it now. Then he had the nerve, the temerity, the unmitigated gall, after yelling at me, to ask me if he could use my washroom before he left. I told him, "No, you're going to have to suffer this one, my son." I followed him down the street to make sure he didn't go to any of my neighbours' houses.

I think these are the kind of people who are out there. I want to warn the public, if they're watching this, and I want to warn my colleagues here who think that this is okay that it's not okay.

This bill does something very simple. This bill has four parts. First of all, it disallows private, fixed rates. If somebody wants to sell it, God bless, as my colleague from Trinity-Spadina would say; they have to sell it at the same government rate. If they can make a profit off of it, good luck for them. It disallows private, fixed rates.

The second thing it does—and, I think, the most important thing—is that it phases out the retailer contracts. As those contracts expire, they cannot be renewed.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: No tearing up.

Mr. Michael Prue: No tearing up. Nobody's tearing up. I heard my colleagues talk about this. Nobody's tearing up a contract, but when that contract expires after two, three, four, whatever, years, it cannot be renewed, and the people revert back to a system where they're going to save 35% to 65%. I think that's an important thing to understand in the bill.

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Next is that it will continue to allow private retailing only on industrial and commercial sales of electricity. Now, this is important, because if there is some way that business thinks they can provide a cheaper rate to large commercial or industrial organizations, this bill would allow them to continue doing so—because I am of a mind, and I think all of us know, that when you have a large commercial or industrial operation, you usually have a pretty good lawyer working for you too, and before you sign the contract, that can be looked at. You have accountants who can look and see what the prices are, whether there's a cost advantage to you. You're not likely to go out there and sign something that has not been fully discussed, and you're not likely to get into this contract because they give you a free \$50 MasterCard just prior to Christmas when you need the money. So that's an important aspect.

The last one—and I think equally as important as all the rest—is this is a bill about consumer protection. The consumer needs to be protected. There is a hierarchy, and I heard it a long time ago, and politicians are not really well placed in the hierarchy. You've got doctors and teachers, and down near the bottom you've got lawyers and you've got used car salesmen and politicians. I think the only ones that I know of that are under all of those are the guys who sell these products door to door to poor, unsuspecting people by using pressure tactics, by using fear, by telling them that the hydro rates are going to go through the roof and that this is the only way you can protect yourself. So I commend my colleague in her very first private member's bill in doing something that is going to help the people of this province.

My colleague from Mississauga, when he spoke, said that there may be some difficulties with the bill, and yes, there are, of course, with any bill. This is why we have bills at second reading. This is why we send them to committee. This is why the committee looks at them and makes the necessary changes, and if the committee passes it, it comes back to the House for third reading and becomes law.

This morning, I had the opportunity to sit in the finance committee with my colleague from Oxford, who is here today, to talk about his bill. It's taken a long time. It's taken him five years, but the bill passed through committee today. But even today, after many attempts, there were still three amendments that were made to the bill that were carried unanimously, because the committee had the time and the expertise to sit down and to see how to make the changes. I'm asking you to give that same time and that same expertise to my colleague's bill and to pass this at second reading and send it to committee. Let's protect consumers.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. David Zimmer: I am happy to speak in support of this bill, and let me tell you why. First of all, in Willowdale, I have a huge number of senior citizens, and in the 10 years that I've represented Willowdale, I have heard time and time and time again about this issue of the energy retailers' fixed-rate multi-year contracts. Eventually, it got so bad that we did introduce legislation in 2011, the Energy Consumer Protection Act, and that set out a whole lot of protections. It did permit the continuing of energy retailers going door to door, but there were a number of protections built in where they could essentially rescind the contract if they had a change of mind.

But the problem is, with respect to a large number of the seniors, it requires a pretty sophisticated analysis to figure out that the energy retailer has sold you something that is really not good for you. You've got to sit down and figure it all out, get your calculator out and put in phone calls. Typically, by then, the timelines to make these changes have expired, or the person is just not capable of figuring out that they've been had on one of these energy retailer contracts.

Despite the fact that we have made a lot of progress since this government introduced that piece of legislation in 2011, the Energy Consumer Protection Act, in my judgment, hearing from my constituents in Willowdale, there is more to be done. What this bill does is take that piece of consumer protection to its next logical step and just says, "Independent energy retailers are now banned." If we have taken all these other steps in the legislation to build in all of these protections so that people can get out of a contract that an independent energy retailer has sold them, we might as well take it to the next step and give complete protection and say, "That's just banned." I don't see any difficulty with that, because the alternative to dealing with a person who knocks on your door to peddle a contract to you is to call your local utility. The

local utility is a reputable utility from the community. It may be from the community of Oshawa; it may be from the Toronto community or one of the other communities. These utilities are responsible to the local municipality and to the politicians, so there's an accountability there. There's a real accountability there.

I suppose in the last analysis—and I use the example of my aged mother, who had a run-in with one of these energy retailers. As sharp as she thought she was and as capable as she thought she was, she would always fall victim to a really slick sales pitch because the sales pitch was so subtle and so convincing—and after all, the mark of a good salesman is the ability to get people to believe what you are saying. So I think this legislation is just the logical next step.

I do want to commend our government for introducing the first bill, in 2011, the Energy Consumer Protection Act. I've got some statistics here, that once we introduced that bill in 2008—then through to 2013, so for the first five years—the number of consumer complaints that were registered with the OEB against energy retailers dropped from about 6,000 to about 1,100. I expect there are a lot of complaints out there, a lot of situations out there, that haven't formalized themselves into a complaint.

Why don't we take the extra step and just eliminate the independent energy retailers and give complete protection? I think it's especially important for the seniors and especially important for my seniors in Willowdale. As I have said, every Friday I go to my constituency office and I can tell you—not so much in the summer, but it's starting now—as soon as the cold weather comes and so on, I'll start hearing these complaints.

I do want to commend the member for bringing this amendment to the act. It's much like the private member's bill that was introduced by the Speaker, where he took the next logical step on the cellphone things. Now there's a fine if you're using a cellphone in the car. We've done that for a number of years now, and the Speaker's bill takes it to the logical next step and says, "You're now going to lose some demerit points." This legislation is like that. It takes the level of protection that we introduced five years ago to the next logical step.

I see no reason why any member of this Legislature should not support this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rod Jackson: It is a distinct privilege to stand here as the member of provincial Parliament for Barrie and represent the people of Barrie and speak freely and openly on Bill 132, unlike my colleague from Durham was able to do.

Bill 132 is certainly a bill that, I think, comes from a place of compassion for a lot of people who have been actually harmed by some of these retailers that provide fixed-rate power deals for their consumers. The one thing I do struggle with—and believe me, I don't think anyone in this room, probably, would tell you that they like these people coming to their door and using some of the tactics

they do. The fact of the matter is that we do have a free market, and the fact of the matter is that people are able to make their own decision whether or not they want to partake of that service. Not all of them are bad, I might add. I haven't met one I liked, but I know that there are services out there that are provided—to businesses, to seniors, to some people in the north—that people actually like to have. They like to be able to have the fixed rate so they can budget, and they're willing to pay a little extra so that they have the ability to be able to budget on an annual basis, especially some businesses that I've talked to. This would cut that option out for them, and cut out the actual ability for people to have an option in the marketplace, whether they want a fixed rate or not a fixed rate.

1530

Having said that, I think there have been some valid points about maybe some cooling-off periods or some other controls on this industry that would make it safer and less predatory on some of the people who have got this service and then been led astray. I think that's probably the angle I'd like to see better. Unfortunately, I don't think I'm going to be able to support the bill on that basis.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Kenora-Rainy River, you have two minutes for your response.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I would like to start by thanking the members from Mississauga–Streetsville, Cambridge, Welland, Oakville, Durham, and Beaches–East York, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and the member for Barrie for weighing in on this bill.

I want to set the record straight on two particular issues that were raised, first of all by the Liberals. The member from Mississauga–Streetsville and the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs alluded to this being a sledgehammer approach when a scalpel could be used. The fact is that people across this province are being swindled by electricity retailers, and there were changes made by this government in 2010. The Liberals branded that as a way to crack down on some of the unethical practices. But that isn't working. Not only is it not working; it's costing our energy system \$260 million more than it did before. Again, we have tried cracking down; that hasn't worked. I think we need to take it to the next level.

I also wanted to respond to some of the themes that were raised by the PC caucus, especially around the voiding language. It is very, very important that I address this, because Bill 132 does not void any existing contracts with electricity retailers. That is extremely important to mention, that all existing contracts with electricity retailers would continue until they naturally expire. That was important to me, because I don't believe in ripping up contracts and I wanted to make sure that the legislation was drafted in such a way that we would not be ripping up any contracts. So it is completely false to suggest that the passage of this bill would result in the tearing up of any existing contracts. There is a provision in the bill where if the consumer and the retailer mutually

decide that they want to end the contract early, they can do that. But there is—absolutely, it's not going to happen.

I encourage all members to support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will take the vote at the end of regular business.

WORKPLACE SAFETY
AND INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT
(PERMANENT PARTIAL DISABILITY
SUPPLEMENTS), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA SÉCURITÉ PROFESSIONNELLE
ET L'ASSURANCE CONTRE
LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL
(SUPPLÉMENT POUR INVALIDITÉ
PARTIELLE À CARACTÈRE PERMANENT)

Mr. Berardinetti moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 128, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to permanent partial disability supplements / Projet de loi 128, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail en ce qui concerne le supplément pour invalidité partielle à caractère permanent.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Thank you kindly, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the House today to initiate debate on a proposed amendment to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act of 1997 with respect to permanent partial disability supplements.

Before I begin, I would like to take a moment to pay tribute to two of my colleagues who recently stood here to pass the same piece of legislation. MPP Laura Albanese from York South–Weston and Minister Mario Sergio from the riding of York West both recognized there was a real need for change in regard to this important issue. Their bills died on the order paper, but I am pleased to be resurrecting that amendment today.

The reason this bill is still so necessary today is the continuing and growing difficulties that partially but permanently disabled workers have when trying to cope with the cost of inflation and their need to maintain a level of purchasing power in today's uncertain economic climate. A partially permanently disabled person is an individual who experiences a debilitating injury that prevents him or her from participating in the workforce as a result of limited mobility. If passed, this bill ensures that old age security benefits would no longer be used in the calculation of workers' compensation schemes for injuries that occurred prior to 1989.

There are two primary components to this proposed legislation. The first would repeal paragraph 4 of subsection 147 of the Workers' Compensation Act. The

second would attempt to reverse certain WSIB decisions under the current legislation.

In 1994, Bill 165 stated that individuals who were injured before 1985 are eligible for a pension that amounted to 75% of their pre-injury average income, and individuals who were injured before 1989 were eligible for a pension that amounted to 90% of their average pre-injury income.

The problem with the current legislation is that when a worker's old age security benefit is adjusted for inflation by the federal government, the injured worker's WSIB benefits are subsequently reduced. That, of course, makes it obviously harder for an injured worker to maintain a sustainable quality of life.

John McKinnon, lawyer and director of the Injured Workers' Consultants community legal clinic, made this point clear in a case letter to an injured worker. Mr. McKinnon noted that old age security benefits are not connected to disability or earnings. Benefits are based on the number of years lived in Canada.

I fail to understand why or how a federal format that has nothing to do with workplace safety is used to consider supplementary income that is aggregated in the WSIB's pension payout program. According to Mr. John McKinnon, pre-accident earnings are, in fact, adjusted by annual indexing, as part of 2007's Bill 187. So the individual's ceiling does go up. However, even after all cost-of-living adjustments, pre-1995 injuries are still about 20% below inflation, and pre-1985 claims are even worse than that with legislated CPI adjustments.

I cannot stress the importance of the proposed legislation enough. Many, if not most, of these permanently disabled workers are now past the age of 65, and are at even greater risk and need of income assistance. According to the 2011 WSIB funding review, chaired by Professor Harry Arthurs, there are now over 150,000 injured workers in Ontario who are losing their purchasing power to inflation each year because of the current legislation.

One of these injured workers is a gentleman by the name of Antonio Mauro. He lives in the Beaches–East York riding, which is the riding of my colleague Mr. Mike Prue. For over five years, Mr. Mauro and Mr. Prue have written to the Ministry of Labour, looking for a remedy to the very problem that my colleagues and I are attempting to resolve here today.

Mr. Mauro is a partially but permanently disabled worker. He is receiving compensation for this, but that compensation is based on his pre-injury wages. Incredibly, that means he is getting paid in 1972 dollars.

The Ministry of Labour responded to Mr. Mauro on April 24 of this year, acknowledging his concerns. But Mr. Mauro was told that the current legislation stands and that the ministry was not considering any amendments to the current legislation. The rationale was “to provide the sustainability of the workers' compensation system ... and to not overcompensate injured workers who receive benefits from several sources.”

With all due respect, Mr. Speaker, the legislation that the ministry is upholding was written almost 10 years

ago. It does not account for the significantly higher costs of goods and services that families all across Ontario face today, and it came before the economic shock to our system of the 2008 global recession.

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As Mr. Mauro notes in his letter to the ministry, at the time of his injury a loaf of bread cost just 20 cents. It's 10 times more expensive now, yet Mr. Mauro is still receiving payments based on that distant fiscal year.

I'm proud of our government: proud that we have made genuine steps towards creating a fair and prosperous Ontario and proud that we are now assisting less fortunate Ontarians to stand up and support themselves. I must ask, however, how can we create a "One Ontario" while also neglecting the needs of workers like Antonio Mauro, workers who were injured while building the foundation for the prosperity we enjoy in this province today? It simply isn't fair to punish these workers just because they were injured in the workplace before 1990. We need to change our course and keep up with the times, for their sake and for their families.

A lot has changed since 1994. Both in the past and in the present, lawmakers have been framing changes in workers' compensation as "increases". What we need to do is to frame our view of compensation changes as "adjustments".

Let me explain. In 2009, an Italian-Canadian organization known as the Comites group met with the then Minister of Labour, Peter Fonseca, to discuss cost-of-living issues. The group stated that when the term "increases" is used, it creates a public impression that injured workers, especially those only partially injured, are faring better than they did when they didn't have their injury.

Of course, that's just ridiculous. The reality, in fact, is quite the opposite. The reality is that the majority of these workers are getting compensated well below the current cost of living because those dollar valuations are decades old. Our objective here is to ensure that workers who were injured before 1990 have a chance to maintain a certain percentage of their pre-injury wages without the reductions in eligible payments as outlined in the federal scheme.

Before I finish, I would like to quote Sir William Meredith, the architect of the Ontario workers' compensation system. In 1914, quite a while ago, almost 100 years ago, Sir Meredith stated that "the true aim of compensation law is to provide for the injured workman and his dependants and to prevent their becoming a charge upon their relatives or friends, or upon the community at large."

This need and desire to take care of our families and friends is what makes Ontario the greatest place to live anywhere. But we are failing a good number of our most vulnerable citizens. Of the more than 191,000 WSIB recipients in Ontario, more than half of them were injured prior to 1990. That's a total of 116,886 injured workers who are vulnerable and struggling, trying desperately to make ends meet, but losing out on their

ability to cope and keep up in today's society. That's simply because they had the bad fortune to be injured on the job over 23 years ago.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm pleased to rise to speak on this bill this afternoon. I'd also like to thank the Minister of Labour for taking the time to speak with me recently about the important labour portfolio as a whole and the challenges that we're facing on some of the issues here in the province of Ontario today.

Bill 128, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Amendment Act, amends section 110 of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act so that any pension a worker is eligible for under the Old Age Security Act does not reduce the worker's permanent partial disability benefits for pre-1985 and pre-1989 injuries.

Of course, this is not the first time that the House has seen this bill. We've seen it before: back in 2012. The MPP for York West, I believe, introduced the same piece of legislation. It was not called for debate back in 2012, likely because the government of the day realized it simply was not practical or fiscally prudent.

With nearly one million people out of work in Ontario today, right across this province, the PC caucus has been urging a change in direction and a new approach. Here with Bill 128, we are getting a complete and total change for the WSIB, but in the wrong direction.

My main problem with the bill is that there could be a whole series of ramifications and outcomes that were not intended. As I understand, there is great potential that the new benefits being added with this bill will be subject to costly litigation as other recipients seek to have the benefits applied more broadly. Not only is this bill a 180-degree change in direction for Ontario's WSIB program; it would require the WSIB to revisit their entire funding strategy. Bill 128 creates benefits without any funding mechanism, and there's a huge potential that these changes could be applied retroactively, which would dramatically increase the costs for the WSIB.

Speaker, I don't need to remind you that since this Premier was coronated, Ontario has lost 38,000 manufacturing jobs; that Ontario is dead last in Canada when it comes to personal wage growth; and that our debt has gone from \$139 billion when the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals were first elected to now approaching \$300 billion. Not only would this bill add significant costs, continuing to grow the Liberal deficit; there is no doubt that it would add to the unfunded WSIB liability.

With one million people out of work in the province of Ontario today, the government should be focusing on the fundamentals: reducing the sky-high energy costs, balancing the budget, reducing red tape and modernizing our outdated labour laws. We have to get our fiscal house in order and get our economic fundamentals right in order to be able to afford additional costs and benefits like those being proposed in Bill 128 here today.

Additionally, I believe more transparency is needed in these discussions and in the development of new labour-

related legislation. It is important that the Ministry of Labour look at this throughout the entire portfolio in the process of creating any new legislation.

For the past couple of weeks I have been out touring across the province in our party's Made in Ontario Jobs Tour. I've been meeting with everyday Ontario residents, workers and job creators, and I can tell you that virtually every one of them has sent me back with a message to get the economic fundamentals right: get our house back in order, bring our energy costs back down to earth, reduce the mountains of government red tape, balance the books, reduce the debt and modernize Ontario's labour laws. It's changes like these that will get our economy growing and help create jobs. It's changes like these that the people in my riding of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex and all across Ontario have told me they badly want.

As I said, I'm going to be opposing this legislation here today. I encourage all members to join me in opposing this bill. It's taking the WSIB down a path that I know they're not prepared to go down. We need to get the unfunded liability back in order and back to a sustainable number. I think that this legislation is going to add to the unfunded liability at a time when, as I said, Ontario's debt is skyrocketing. It's almost at \$300 billion. I think that this legislation is flawed and I just don't think Ontario can afford it at this time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Cindy Forster: It's an honour to rise and talk about this important bill, a bill that I'm certainly going to support today. I only have a very few minutes because my colleagues want to speak to this.

When workers are injured in this province, whether it is pre-1990 or post-1990, it has a huge impact on their lives and on their earning abilities. While they're on compensation benefits, whether it was under the Worker's Compensation Act or under WSIB's WSIA act, they have impacts on their income earning and they have impacts on their ability to contribute to CPP, which impacts their CPP at the end of the day.

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So in addition to having to deal with pain and suffering from the impact of their injury throughout their life—perhaps having to work reduced hours because of their injury, or even change jobs because of that injury—they shouldn't have to be impacted, as in this situation pre-1990, with having their old age security pension clawed back because they're collecting a pension that was intended to compensate them for a partial permanent impairment, for their pain and suffering, and for their future earning losses.

As the member from Scarborough Southwest said, the member from Beaches—East York has been dealing with this issue for a particular person, Antonio Mauro, since 2010. He's been trying to address this issue for this man who could have a CPP pension today of \$850 a month, but is in fact only getting \$120 a month CPP because he could no longer work. So it has huge impacts.

While I have another minute or so, I just want to address the issue of other people post-1990. Somebody

who is on full-time WSIB benefits and reaches age 65—they've been off for a period of years, and they have the option under WSIB to actually contribute 5% to 10% of their benefits to a pension plan. When they reach age 65, WSIB sends them a lump-sum payment.

In the one situation I've heard of, the person received \$20,000 in a lump sum in the form of a pension that he wouldn't normally have. But that actual \$20,000 got clawed back by old age security. So in the year that this person turned 65, they received no old age security benefits because they had received \$20,000 in a lump sum payment and had no option to receive it on a monthly basis.

So there are many issues with respect to WSIB and old age security that need to be addressed, but I'm glad to have the opportunity to speak today about injured workers, the effects of their injuries and WSIB.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: It is a pleasure for me to join this debate. I'm really glad that the member from Scarborough Southwest is reintroducing this bill today. This bill means to address an historic injustice. It's a question of fairness, to put it in simple words.

It has been introduced a number of times. As the member mentioned, I first introduced it in 2011. It was reintroduced in 2012. I could not reintroduce it at that point in time because, until the not-too-distant past, I was the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour, and as a PA in that ministry, I could not introduce a bill pertaining to or dealing with issues of that ministry. So I'm really pleased that it's being reintroduced.

Essentially, as we heard, the issue is that if you are getting a pension under OAS, your permanent partial disability benefits get clawed back, so you're getting less money. Unfortunately, perhaps it isn't an easy problem to explain in just a few words to those who are watching at home. I do find that it was best explained by John McKinnon, a lawyer with the Injured Workers' Consultants community legal clinic of Toronto, who basically says and explains that permanent disability pensioners who were injured before 1990 have their workers' compensation benefits reduced every year by the amount that their old age security benefit increases for inflation. In other words, in the view of the worker, you see this amount of money being stolen from you, if you will. It's a small amount that the federal government will give you to keep up with the cost of living.

This issue was first brought to my attention back in 2009. I was present at a meeting with Minister Fonseca, who was Minister of Labour at the time, and it was a meeting with advocates for injured workers and representatives of the Italian community, mainly this organization named Comites. That's when I met Mr. Antonio Mauro. Mr. Antonio Mauro is not one of my constituents. He's a constituent of the member from Beaches—East York, who has advocated on his behalf, but Mr. Mauro is well known in his Italian-Canadian community.

The reason why he's well known is because his case has been taken as an example. This man was injured over

40 years ago and has become a symbol of this unfairness and this historical injustice that I spoke to at the beginning. I have to say that when I heard his story, I was really moved. That's what brought me to present subsequently that private member's bill that we're debating today.

This man worked, like many other injured workers, to build our country. So I want to say, for example, to the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, who encouraged us to focus on the fundamentals, that a just society and a fair society cannot be built on the backs of those who have built this country—not on the backs of injured workers. I think that is very fundamental in the society that I want to live in and that I believe all members in this House want to live in.

I know that the member from Scarborough Southwest has spoken about the lack of rationale of the inclusion of the OAS by the WSIB. You could understand if there were other earnings that would be clawed back, but not an old age pension. An old age pension we all get in this country as Canadian citizens because we live here. In a way, for those who have been injured before 1990, you're getting hurt twice: once because you got hurt on the job, and second, because you now don't have an entitlement to a pension as every other citizen of this country does.

I again want to thank the member from Scarborough Southwest for reintroducing this bill. I know we're also expecting Mr. Orlando Buonastella, who is going to be here. He's probably just temporarily delayed. He is part of the Injured Workers' Consultants community legal clinic of Toronto. He has been a great advocate for Mr. Mauro and a great advocate for this private member's bill.

I encourage all members to vote for this. It's a question of fairness.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: First of all, I want to commend the member from Scarborough Southwest. I think the intent here and the motive are very worthy. I certainly understand that part.

I think it's important to put the context around this that was explained by our critic on this file, the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. He explained what can be—and the NDP has made remarks as well—a fairly complicated business, this entitlement to the permanent partial disability supplement, and the time frames that are mapped out around those injuries: pre-1995, pre-1989 and pre-1985.

The bill itself is quite straightforward. It implies some entitlements that at the moment don't exist. As a member of the government side of the business, he certainly could speak to the Minister of Labour and initiate—within a budget, for instance, these kinds of amendments can be made, if it's the wishes of the government. But I'm getting the impression that it's not the wishes of the government, otherwise it would be a government bill.

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They've had a couple of bills on the WSIB and rates, and more recently, starting in July 2013, for instance, the

government has increased the rates in WSIB as much as 15% in some of the rate classifications. That's an important part of this bill because you're creating an entitlement without creating a revenue stream. That's very, very important.

It's fine to put out some flowers in the window and speak about important emotive stories about people. We had one today, in fact, in the Legislature. They talked about a person who's on a hunger strike, and that question was brought up by the NDP, about a 72-year-old man on a hunger strike. It may even be with respect to his entitlements for a disability pension. But again, the point of the bill is increasing entitlements.

Our argument, in opposition to supporting it, is not the sentimental intentions here; it's the fact that if you want to do it, it could be a government bill. Then it would actually get done. This is a private member's bill and, as such, will probably sit on some order paper and never, ever be called into action.

So you're making a statement about constituents, like all of us do, to try to help them out to resolve issues. I would hope that they've applied to the various appeal mechanisms within the WSIB. That's for sure.

Here is what happens, though, and this is relevant to the discussion: When you create an entitlement where there's no revenue stream attached to it, you're creating an unfunded liability. More recently, the public accounts committee has dealt with the WSIB, and they've dealt specifically with the unfunded liability. They issued a report, and this report was issued by the chair of the WSIB, Elizabeth Witmer, dated—I might submit this as a record—November 4, 2013. What they are saying is that since 2003 the unfunded liability at the WSIB was \$7 billion, and in 2013 the unfunded liability has doubled. It's \$13 billion. The issue here is it has doubled and they've increased the premiums for WSIB and they've expanded the rate group as well as the people within the group, especially in construction, where people who aren't even on the site—they tax the entire payroll. WSIB premiums are based on payroll. It's a tax on payroll, and we have in Ontario high unemployment.

I'm going back to the entitlement of a permanent partial disability supplement. I agree that it's something that should be discussed in today's high-cost world in Ontario—with electricity and other prices being out of this world—that the government should probably move ahead with it and take your advice on the initiative made through.

But I've made my point here that really, quite honestly, there is no possible way that we can support the way this bill is structured. The intent? We applaud that. But what you've put forward here in the bill simply does not make sense. We have an insurance system that's unfunded today by \$14 billion roughly. You're adding another entitlement here and no revenue stream.

In your response, in the two minutes, perhaps you could explain—to encourage us to vote for your bill—how you would pay for it, because that's the problem here. We're always going around promising things and not realizing we have an operating deficit, really, of

about \$14 billion, so we're spending more than we're earning.

I want to put on the record—and I think the best reference for people looking into the debate here would be looking at what our critic, Monte McNaughton, said. I would say he said—and member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex made it very clear—that the problem we have on this side is them saying one thing but not being sincere about it. That's really what he was saying. There's no way that we should be stepping out on the limb and encouraging this sort of thing when business today in Ontario—we've seen Heinz pretty well going out of business, or at least 800 jobs lost in the Leamington area and the farmers who feed that: one more example where the payroll from Heinz, which would generate revenue for WSIB, will no longer be paying, so the deficit will likely be worse.

Unless you have some magic bullet here in Ontario to turn this thing around from having the highest unemployment rate in Canada, provincially, and not having a plan of how to get out of it—our leader Tim Hudak has talked relentlessly about clearing the deck and providing a jobs and economy plan. It simply isn't here, and this bill, in my view, doesn't satisfy how we are going to pay for it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to have the opportunity today to speak to this motion, because it deals with one small issue in an area that has serious problems for workers, and particularly the injured workers in Ontario.

The bill will make sure that any pension a worker is eligible for under the Old Age Security Act does not reduce the worker's permanent partial disability benefits from pre-1985 and pre-1989 injuries under the pre-1997 act. That is something I can easily support and will be happy to do so.

But the reality is that this government has not done well at all when it comes to the WSIB. One good thing they did, in my opinion, was appoint Harry Arthurs as chair of the Funding Review committee for the WSIB. It's a shame that they didn't listen to him or act on almost all the major recommendations Mr. Arthurs made in his report.

For example, his report recommended that benefits for partially disabled workers be fully indexed for inflation. You wouldn't think it would be a hard concept to understand as a simple matter of fairness. If a person's income doesn't go up while the prices of everything else they need to buy goes up, then they're falling behind. But instead, all the government offered was a 0.5% increase in 2013 and a 0.5% increase in 2014.

Another major problem with the WSIB is the experience rating—again, something that Mr. Arthurs had some very serious concerns about. Experience rating provides financial benefit to employers who have low levels of lost-time injury statistics and costs. What that means is that an employer disguises a serious injury as a no-lost-time medical aid accident, and their experience rating improves and they can receive a rebate from the WSIB.

At the other end, employers who have a higher level of lost-time injuries are penalized.

It provides a strong financial incentive to hide injuries—incentives to make it cheaper for them to hide them rather than prevent injuries in the first place. That's exactly what employers who are watching their bottom line will do. Workers are coerced back to work sooner than they should, possibly causing more harm to that worker, just so the employer can protect their experience rating.

Mr. Arthurs recognized this serious concern and proposes that the WSIB adopt a policy to protect the integrity of these programs and commit the necessary resources to detect, prevent and punish abuses and establish a credible monitoring program. But again, the government and the WSIB have failed to act.

Speaker, as a member of the government agencies committee, I had the privilege of taking part in the review of the WSIB last year. I was going to say "the pleasure of taking part," but you can hardly call listening to complaints and concerns about the WSIB and the plight of the injured workers of this province a pleasure. The NDP members of that committee were deeply disappointed that the committee members from other parties who heard the exact same evidence could not support our motions to restore full indexation and fully implement Mr. Arthurs' recommendations on experience rating.

In closing, I'm happy to support this small portion that could benefit our injured workers in Ontario, but we certainly have a very long way to go.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise today in support of Bill 128, and I want to start my remarks by acknowledging my colleague from Scarborough Southwest for bringing this bill before the House. I also want, like the member from Scarborough Southwest, to acknowledge my colleague from York South-Weston and the minister of seniors' affairs from York West, who have tried to bring this bill before the House. Through this continuous, consistent determination to support injured workers in Ontario, we hope to improve the quality of life of these workers who have built Ontario.

1610

The member from Scarborough Southwest indicated early in his remarks that, if this bill passes, the old age security benefit would no longer be used in the calculation of workers' compensation schemes from injuries that occurred prior to 1989. The number of injured workers all of us in our constituency offices experience—I know.

Shortly after I got elected, I received numerous phone calls and concerns from workers injured prior to the 1990s, and the concern was the fact that they had been disadvantaged. So, here is an opportunity in this House today to pass this bill, go to second reading and go to committee, so that we can provide some kind of support to these workers who have built Ontario.

I was listening very attentively to the comments from my colleague opposite, the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. I was absolutely disappointed. Here is a

member of the opposition who is a critic, supposedly to support the workers of Ontario—not even a bone of compassion for those who have built Ontario.

I was very pleased with my colleague from Welland, a nurse, who could speak passionately about injured workers and what they have gone through. I was very, very disappointed—to say that this proposed legislation will affect X, Y and Z—at the end of the day, this proposed legislation is very small; it's to protect injured workers who have injured themselves prior to 1990.

The other piece is: My colleague from Scarborough Southwest, as well as my colleague from York South-Weston, talked about the report from Mr. McKinnon, the lawyer for the Injured Workers' Consultants community legal clinic. I want to quote what he said in his letter, dated back to 2010. He said, "The injustice would be eliminated by repealing section 147(16) para. 4 and (17) para. 4 retroactively to their effective date in 1995. This would remedy a significant injustice for a small group of older injured workers."

This is not talking about thousands and thousands of workers who have been injured. This is a very small group that we need to try to protect and support. At the end of the day, we are all here in the House for one reason: to better and improve the quality of life of our constituents across Ontario. I cannot believe that the official opposition's critic for labour can say that this bill will not help.

At the end of the day, we need to ask the opposition party: Are they here to support—

Interjection: Show some compassion.

Ms. Soo Wong: Where's the compassion? Each one of us here knows of an injured worker. What is our duty? What is our responsibility? To protect them, especially those who have built this province. You are sitting on a chair that's been built by Ontarians. At the end of the day, we have responsibility, and at the end of the day, we have accountability. It's about fairness and justice.

I want to end my remarks by quoting the member from Scarborough Southwest in his explanatory note for Bill 128: "The bill amends section 110 of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act ... does not reduce the worker's permanent partial disability benefits for pre-1985 and pre-1989 injuries under the pre-1997 act."

We are here to do a job: protecting workers every day who built Ontario. I strongly advocate that every member of this House, when they are voting on this bill, think of all those builders in our communities, especially those who have been hurt and need our support. This is what we're here for.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I want to start off by addressing some of the Progressive Conservative issues with this bill, because, of course, we in the New Democratic Party support it. It's a small step but it's a necessary step, so I commend the member from Scarborough Southwest for bringing it forward.

It's a weird kind of economy that says that if you keep injured workers in poverty, it will somehow save money. Nothing could be further from the truth. All you do, if you sap one ministry, is that you spread that cost to another. So someone who is living in poverty then uses the resources of the Ministry of Health more—it costs more; uses the community and social services ministry more—it costs more. Poverty costs this province about \$3 billion a year, and that's why: because we shift the costs from one ministry to another. That's all that it does. So your solutions do not work. They're not economic; they're bookkeeping. So I wanted to say that first.

Second of all, I want to talk about compassion, because the member from Scarborough—Agincourt raised the issue of compassion. As we sit here in warmth, with jobs, there is a man named Jimmy Velgakis who is sitting on a sidewalk outside of WSIB and has not eaten for 10 days. I am fasting along with him; I'm the incredible shrinking woman over here. Jimmy has been fighting a battle with them for 20 years—20 years—and still has not received justice. Two years ago, he did a hunger strike there and was promised, by then-chair Steve Mahoney—in all good faith and compassion, I believe, but WSIB did not keep up their part of the bargain. He was promised that his case would be reopened on its merits. It was not reopened on its merits. So here we are again. He's 72 years old. He has diabetes.

I would say to the members across the aisle in the Liberal Party: If you want to speak about compassion, here's an instance where you can actually show compassion. How much would it cost to address Jimmy's case? Really, it's not a lot of money—it's so pathetic—to allow a senior to walk away from this struggle with some degree of dignity.

It makes me stir-crazy when I have to deal with bureaucrats—I don't know how the government feels, or the other opposition party—people who do their jobs by the book, by the rules, and forget what their jobs are about in the first place.

In the very first place, WSIB was set up to help workers. That's the point of it. That's how it was set up in the first place. That was the point of it. The question we have to ask ourselves, all of us, now: Is it doing that job well? I would warrant that it is not.

You heard from my colleagues about the Arthurs recommendations. They're not being followed. You heard about experience rating, a ridiculous system that should go the way of the dodo bird. Now you hear about a small change which would make such a big difference, but it's such a horrible injustice that this bill addresses.

We have to ask ourselves—there are major problems here. I would appeal to my friends in the Liberal Party: Yes, show some compassion—and appeal to my friends in the Conservative Party. Look at the real costs of poverty. Just by shifting the costs from one ministry to the other, you don't save any money. It doesn't save any money. So a little bit of compassion, a little bit of real fiscal responsibility, would be in order here.

Just to sum up, thank you for bringing forward the bill. We are going to support it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? None?

The member for Scarborough Southwest, you have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I wish I had more time. We had seven different speakers from various parties. I just want to thank them all. I have taken notes, and I greatly appreciate what you have commented on today.

I want to introduce, in the west public gallery, Mr. Orlando Buonastella. He's with the Injured Workers' Consultants community legal clinic of Toronto, and he came along with other people to lobby for this bill today.

1620

Mr. Speaker, there are so many injured workers across Ontario who cannot get properly compensated, and that's a real problem. I wish that we could deal with it today. The comments made by the member from Parkdale are very significant. We're moving the costs from one part of our budget to another part of our budget.

I also wanted to just dedicate this bill, if it does go forward, to all injured workers across Ontario. My 83-year-old father is watching this right now from home. For over 40 years, he worked in the working class as a foreman of a lumber mill. He got injured several times—

Mr. Mike Colle: Home Lumber.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: It was called Home Lumber and was in the riding of Scarborough Southwest, as my colleague says.

Now, my father is 83 years old. He worked for 40 years, and I saw, growing up, how hard he worked. He actually got injured several times. One time he lost his toe. But he healed himself, went back to work and never claimed any compensation of any kind from any government. He just went back to work, and that was the most important thing for him in his life.

He still suffers now because he lost his toe, and he suffers now from something called tinnitus, which is ringing in the ear. He tells me, "In one ear I can barely hear. At nighttime, I just hear ringing in one ear and a different ringing here." It was all caused by the lumber mill. There were no protections back then. Nothing could happen; nothing was done to protect him. His hearing is almost gone. At nighttime, he calls me and says, "Lorenzo, I can't hear. All I can hear in my ears is ringing." So I also wanted to mention him today. He's part of the working class.

I think, as mentioned, again, by the member from Parkdale, we have to be able to recognize people, and other members spoke about that as well. We have to recognize that working-class people don't sit and wear ties. They go out there and they risk their lives every day working in blue-collar jobs. So I want to recognize them today.

Thank you for giving me time to respond, and I thank all members who spoke to the bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. All the time provided for private members' public business has expired.

FISCAL TRANSPARENCY
AND ACCOUNTABILITY
AMENDMENT ACT
(PRE-ELECTION REPORTS), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LA TRANSPARENCE
ET LA RESPONSABILITÉ FINANCIÈRES
(RAPPORTS PRÉÉLECTORAUX)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 58, standing in the name of Ms. Scott.

Ms. Scott has moved second reading of Bill 126, An Act to amend the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, 2004.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declared it carried. There were no noes. Done. I mean, I paused and I saw nothing.

Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is being referred to?

Ms. Laurie Scott: The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance. Agreed? Agreed.

ENERGY CONSUMER PROTECTION
AMENDMENT ACT
(ELIMINATION OF FIXED RATE
ELECTRICITY CONTRACTS), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION
DES CONSOMMATEURS D'ÉNERGIE
(ÉLIMINATION DES CONTRATS
DE FOURNITURE D'ÉLECTRICITÉ
À TARIF FIXE)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Campbell has moved second reading of Bill 132, An Act to amend the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010 to eliminate fixed rate electricity contracts between retailers and consumers.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a couple of noes.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Kenora—Rainy River.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I'd like to refer it to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills. Agreed? Agreed.

WORKPLACE SAFETY
AND INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT
(PERMANENT PARTIAL DISABILITY
SUPPLEMENTS), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA SÉCURITÉ PROFESSIONNELLE
ET L'ASSURANCE CONTRE
LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL
(SUPPLÉMENT POUR INVALIDITÉ
PARTIELLE À CARACTÈRE PERMANENT)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Berardinetti has moved second reading of Bill 128, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to permanent partial disability supplements.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? In my opinion—I didn't hear any noes.

I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): You've got to shout. I can't hear it—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Scarborough Southwest.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I would like to send this bill to the Standing Committee on Government Agencies.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that it be referred to government agencies. Agreed? Agreed.

Orders of the day?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Point of order, Mr. Speaker: Just for clarification, it should be recorded that Bill 128 was on division. There were noes, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I struggled with my decision. I did not hear anybody. It's carried.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I made my decision.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WASTE REDUCTION ACT, 2013
LOI DE 2013 SUR LA RÉDUCTION
DES DÉCHETS

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 7, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 91, An Act to establish a new regime for the reduction, reuse and recycling of waste and to repeal the Waste Diversion Act, 2002 / Projet de loi 91, Loi créant un nouveau cadre pour la réduction, la réutilisation et le recyclage des déchets et abrogeant la Loi de 2002 sur le réacheminement des déchets.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 91.

I know how important it is to recycle in this province. In 1986, when I was deputy mayor in Oxford county, we recognized the need for an efficient recycling program, so we started one. I fought for 10 years opposing the regional landfill site at the time. In that opposition of course, you can't be opposed to landfill unless you are willing to come up with some solutions to deal with the waste.

So we went to Hamburg, New York, where a local recycling project was under way. The system was simple: They attached trailers to the back of the garbage trucks, and the employees who collected the garbage would put the recycling in the trailers. We decided to replicate that system.

To make it work, we had to encourage the people of Oxford to recycle. To do this, we made curbside recycling mandatory and charged \$1 a bag for garbage. Of course, we would not pick up the garbage if it wasn't recycled, because it was mandatory. The bag tag system is now popular in Ontario, but at that time, it was only the second in Canada and the first in Ontario.

Right away, we had an over 35% diversion rate, 12% higher than the current Ontario rate. As the program grew, we bought the necessary equipment to crush cans and handle plastics. It was a simple solution, and it worked. We diverted countless tonnes of materials that would be going to landfills and instead used the material to create new products and benefit the environment. I'm proud of that achievement. Because of that project, I'm very familiar with the benefits of recycling.

But there's more than just an environmental benefit to our project. We were able to help create jobs in the province. Roughly seven new jobs are created for every 1,000 tonnes of waste recycled. On average, less than one job is created for the same amount of waste going to landfill.

We started a program in Oxford that benefited the community and the province and the environment at the same time. Establishing recycling programs like this one in Oxford help this province divert countless tonnes of waste from landfills. However, even with members of my community participating in these programs, Ontario's waste diversion rate has not moved from 23% in the last 10 years. Mr. Speaker, this is a problem. The more waste diverted from landfills, the better.

This is an issue that hits close to home for me. Just recently, I received 13,000 letters to deliver to the Minister of the Environment about a proposed landfill site in my riding. Afterwards, I spoke to the Legislature about

the amazing efforts of my community, which voiced their displeasure with this project. I share their concern and would support an initiative that would reduce the amount of landfill created in this province. However, these initiatives may not place any undue burden on Ontario's taxpayers.

One of the major problems with this legislation is the government's solution to eco fees. It is no secret that consumers have been paying increased rates to help recycle certain products. This government's solution is not to eliminate the eco fees. The solution is not even to deal with the larger issues that have led to the introduction of these eco fees. Instead, the solution is to bury the eco fee tax in the regular ticket price of the item.

The reasoning is purely political and it has little to do with diverting waste. The government wants to be able to claim they eliminated eco fees to help consumers, but really, they're just hiding the eco fees in different places. The prices of recyclable products will not drop, yet the government will claim success.

In addition, hiding the eco fees will have a negative impact on Ontario's businesses. The Coalition for Effective Waste Reduction in Ontario writes that the price increase will "further widen the gap between prices in Ontario and the US, and will result in more cross-border and online shopping, costing many Ontario-based jobs."

Hiding eco fees is purely an example of political gamesmanship and, at the end of the day, will severely impact Ontario businesses and their employees. Sony Canada president Doug Wilson shared our concern about the hidden eco fees and wrote, "Sony does not see Bill 91 as a 'job creation' piece of legislation. If passed in its current form, Bill 91 may be a catalyst for significant job loss."

Mr. Speaker, I'm talking about a significant job loss, yet there seems to be no one on the other side of the House here listening. This is too important to gloss over, and I'd like to move adjournment of the debate until we can get some members of the government to be here to listen to it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Oxford has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I believe the nays have it.

This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1633 to 1703.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Could I ask members to take their seats.

Mr. Hardeman has moved adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour, please stand and remain standing.

All those opposed, please stand and remain standing.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 0; the nays are 18.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The motion is lost.

Mr. Hardeman, the floor is yours.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: As I was saying before the interruption, I was speaking about some of the comments that we've been getting from the stakeholders who are affected by this bill. I was speaking about Sony Canada. Also, the Ontario food, beverage and packaging goods manufacturers wrote that, "The government did not complete an analysis to assess the costs to business and the impacts on existing facilities and jobs in the manufacturing sector, many of which are high-paying value-added jobs."

I'm not asking the government to create another panel; I'm simply suggesting that they should consider the effects of policies before they introduce the legislation. These wishes are echoed by many other organizations. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce wrote, quite simply, "There is a need for greater due diligence on behalf of the government."

Sadly, we're seeing the impact on jobs already. The Heinz plant that closed in Leamington just last week will cost Ontarians over 1,000 jobs. They were one of the many food processors who responded to the survey the PC caucus sent out last year. When asked if there were any obstacles that prevent trade with other jurisdictions, Heinz answered that one of the largest problems was the province's recycling requirements and regulations.

Heinz also wrote in a written submission on Bill 91 to the Ministry of the Environment that the proposed framework is not the producers' responsibility, as producers do not truly have a choice to determine how best to meet their obligations.

Our manufacturers want to do their part. They want to recycle, but they need a system that is cost-effective and that works.

With that, I suggest that, hearing that, the government will very likely want to go back and create a bill just for that. On that, I will move to adjourn the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Hardeman has moved adjournment of the House. Agreed?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1707 to 1737.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I have members take their seats, please?

Mr. Hardeman has moved adjournment of the House.

All those in favour, please stand and remain standing.

All those against, please stand and remain standing.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 0; the nays are 16.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion lost.

Mr. Hardeman, you have the floor.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, with the policies that I just mentioned before the vote, it's ironic that this bill is entitled the Waste Reduction Act. If government truly wanted to reduce waste, they would start by scrapping the unnecessary new bureaucracy that this bill

would create. In fact, there is already too much bureaucracy when it comes to recycling. There are simple alternatives. We believe that the government should set recycling targets, create environmental standards and then enforce those standards. These kinds of logical policies are necessary.

Another one in the bill, of course, is the eco fees and the cost of doing that. Farmers across our province are paying out of pocket and making sacrifices so they can afford tires for their equipment. That money is being given to Stewardship Ontario so that the tires can be recycled properly, but instead the money is being used to put up booths at BuskerFest. I really don't think that's good use of recycling money.

Mr. Speaker, recycling helps limit the amount of garbage going into landfills, it helps the environment, it saves taxpayers money in the long run, and it just makes sense. The wonderful part about a recycling program, like the one I helped start in Oxford, is that it will benefit everyone. Sadly, Bill 91 is not an example of a proper recycling program. Businesses don't want to fall behind in the market, consumers don't want to be deceived about the true price they are paying and producers don't want to see more unnecessary government agencies.

The recycling program has many problems that need to be fixed, but Bill 91 is not the solution. That's why I think it's so important that we convince this government to go out and actually write a bill or come forward with legislation that will solve the problem in recycling. Use some of the good suggestions by the PC Party and our critic for the environment to put in place something that will work not only for our environment but will work for the producers and make us more competitive, instead of wasting the opportunity to create jobs by putting forward this legislation just to politically hide the cost of recycling. It just doesn't make sense. That's why they should change the direction—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Harris: I think it's important that we address the problems with this bill first and foremost. The first and most obvious one is that the Liberal government has done absolutely no financial analysis whatsoever, and I find that alarming. The only number we have is a rough idea about the cost of the blue box.

The Liberals have indicated that they want to increase the consumer share of the blue box cost by half, so we can assume that will be an additional \$100 million, but we don't know how much more consumers will have to pay on top of that, and I think you have to ask yourself, why is that the case?

I would suggest that if the government was serious about getting this bill through the House, it would actually answer some critical questions that we've proposed. For instance, how much will designating paper and packaging in the industrial, commercial and institutional sector cost? How much is the Waste Reduction Authority going to cost? How much will the authority's enforcement branch cost? How much will the authority's tribu-

al cost? How many jobs will Ontario's manufacturing sector lose as a result of new regulations and costs created under this bill? We just heard about Heinz this week. That is a perfect example of those good manufacturing jobs we could lose.

The biggest question we need to answer is, how much money will the Liberals force Ontarians to shell out every time they make a purchase at their local supermarket or department store? I think this question is even more important ahead of Black Friday, which is tomorrow, because at the end of the day, we need to remember that our concern should be about making life more affordable for Ontarians. The focus of the government shouldn't be finding new ways to squeeze more money out of Ontarians' pockets, which they are, through Bill 91.

If the government is serious, I would encourage the Minister of the Environment to table any and all analysis of the impact Bill 91 will have on Ontario's economy and its hard-working families.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I just want to make a couple of points on Bill 91. Let's see: We've debated this for more than 14 hours; we've had 52 members of the Legislature who have already spoken to this bill; and despite the opposition, the PC Party, saying they want to clear the decks, they're tying up legislation. We just saw that with the bells, further delay, so I call on the opposition to stop stalling and help us pass this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I listened carefully for the limited time that the member from Oxford was given to bring some attention, and I believe he used all of his allowed time, plus some in some respects.

The reason I say that is he mentioned the dispute in his riding about a new landfill site, and how disconnected and discomfoting it is for communities. It's a tough decision. I think back to when the NDP were in government and they had the Interim Waste Authority, the IWA. The Interim Waste Authority was given a lot of money, a bundle of money, to allocate that each region was to take care of their own garbage, and—one of the NDP members will recall this—Walter Pitman, I think, was put in charge of it at the time.

Here's what they did. They spent about \$50 million. They never located one bag of garbage. All they did is talk about it, and today they're still struggling with the limited amount of landfill and the application process itself.

Here's the real issue: In my riding, something very, very complicated has come up. We have the first modern energy-from-waste plant that's being run by a company called Covanta. There was a forum on energy and alternatives, and this is the technology that's used in other countries. They are using waste itself—genuine waste—and when it's heated at very high temperatures the molecular structure of the material, the contents, actually changes. When you apply heat to a material, it

changes its state. They are recapturing the gas, which causes synergy within the plant—the chemistry of it all.

In my view, this government hasn't got one new idea in Bill 91. The member from Kitchener—Conestoga and his staff have done a remarkable job of deconstructing Bill 91, which is nothing more than a shell game. What that bill does is hide the actual eco fee in the price of the product. No one knows how much money—no accountability. It's a complete sham.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Milloy: This is actually becoming a little farcical. We have had hours and hours and hours and hours of debate. We have a bill that needs to go to committee for further study. It's time that we pass this bill and drop the bell-ringing nonsense that's going on.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Oxford, you have two minutes.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank the government House leader and the Minister of Consumer Services and the member from Durham for their comments. Thank you very much for that. I also want to particularly thank the member from Kitchener—Conestoga for his comments today—not only the comments today, but all the work that he has done in pointing out the challenges that this bill prepares.

It has become quite obvious, as the process has been going on, that in fact the challenges are being put forward by a lot of people in the province, the stakeholders that are going to be affected by this bill, and the response is extremely negative on what this bill will do in the job creation part and helping our economy grow and providing jobs for our people. That's why he's working so hard to make sure that this bill, at the very least, gets changed to the fact that it will not do that, and we can put a different plan in place.

For a moment, I just want to talk about that plan. It's to put a plan in place that is really going to reduce recycling and make the recycling programs work in the most cost-effective and efficient manner possible. That is never by government setting up another organization. If we want to give the responsibility of looking after the recycling process in this province to the actual generators of the material, then we have to let them do it in a cost-effective manner.

Presently, the way the government is doing it is not working. We saw that in the eco fees on tires. They just keep adding them up, and it's all because the government says how they have to dispose of them. I spoke to the Tire Stewardship people, and in fact they said that if they were allowed to do it their way they could do it a lot better, but the province has regulation that says how they have to do it, and they just can't do it for the price that it could be done. We need to give that back to the industry. If they're paying for it, they should be doing it.

Thank you very much to those who spoke to it and thank you very much for the time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I'd like to get up today because we're talking about how we're trying to filibuster this and continue this on with ringing the bells, but let's understand this: We're the Queen's loyal opposition and our job is to take care of the Ontario taxpayers because you do not. You have put these people in the worst position ever, where equalization payments—we're spending \$1.5 million more an hour than we take in and we are in the worst position that we've ever been in. We are a have-not province.

We, on this side, are worried about the people of Ontario. We, with Tim Hudak, are the most responsible people in here.

Let me say this: First of all, we have every company running out of here because we don't reinvest in the people who are here. Stop saying that you're not here to get jobs, because your job is to create the environment for people to want to be here, and they don't. Capital is mobile; Bay Street knows it. You're not going to come to high debt, high taxes and high hydro.

In saying that, we have—let's name them all: We've got Cliffs, US Steel, Heinz, Redpath, Bick's, Caterpillar, Nestlé. All of these people that don't stay here—Heinz, for example; 104 years they've been here. They were here because they invested in the Ontario people and wanted to make things better, and for the last two weeks or a month that you decided to reinvest in them, it was a little too late, because you did not want to give these people what they deserve to have.

In saying that, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. McKenna has moved adjournment of the debate. Agreed?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. It'll be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1751 to 1821.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. McKenna has moved adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour, please stand and remain standing.

All those opposed, please stand and remain standing.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 0; the nays are 2.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): This House stands adjourned until Monday, November 25, at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1821.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Samia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Holyday, Douglas C. (PC)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
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Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	Niagara Falls	

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COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Laura Albanese, Steve Clark
Mike Colle, Joe Dickson
Rob Leone, Amrit Mangat
Taras Natyshak, Jerry J. Ouellette
Michael Prue
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs / Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Soo Wong
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Catherine Fife, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Douglas C. Holyday, Mitzie Hunter
Monte McNaughton, Michael Prue
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Donna H. Cansfield
Sarah Campbell, Donna H. Cansfield
Grant Crack, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Michael Harris
Peggy Sattler, Laurie Scott
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Rick Bartolucci
Laura Albanese, Rick Bartolucci
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Percy Hatfield
Mitzie Hunter, Jim McDonell
Randy Pettapiece, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Phil McNeely
Teresa J. Armstrong, Steven Del Duca
Bob Delaney, Frank Klees
Jack MacLaren, Phil McNeely
Rob E. Milligan, Shafiq Qaadri
Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bas Balkissoon, Grant Crack
Vic Dhillon, Garfield Dunlop
Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, Lorenzo Berardinetti
France Gélinas, Helena Jacek
Bill Mauro, Phil McNeely
Norm Miller, John O'Toole
Jagmeet Singh
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
Donna H. Cansfield, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Monte Kwinter
Jane McKenna, Rick Nicholls
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Bas Balkissoon, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Ernie Hardeman
Rod Jackson, Helena Jacek
Paul Miller
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Select Committee on Developmental Services / Comité spécial sur les services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle

Chair / Présidente: Laura Albanese
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson
Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 40th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 25 November 2013

Lundi 25 novembre 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 25 November 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 25 novembre 2013

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It is my pleasure this morning to introduce Darlene Smith-Kling, who is president of the Chatham Kent Women's Centre board of directors, and five of her other colleagues, who are not here yet, but I will mention them: Laurie Willick, Lisa Christian, Darlins Diaz Pages, Patrizia Zonta and Melissa Bolanos. Welcome them to our Legislature.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'd like to introduce my guests today. They were here in my office, and we had a very informed meeting about the Canadian Diabetes Association. I'd like to welcome Celso Oliveira, Kerry Bruder and Suneel Mehra. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Grant Crack: It gives me great pleasure today to introduce and welcome the chair of Flowers Canada, Mr. Gerard Schouwenaar, who is here with his sons, Karl and Jake, today. Welcome.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to introduce a good friend of mine, Trevor Dick from the Ottawa Valley. He will be joining us today on the Legiskaters hockey team. We're looking for a W today. Welcome, Trevor, to the Legislature.

Mr. Taras Nytyshak: It's my pleasure to welcome Don Taylor, who's the chair of the Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers. Speaker, as all honourable members know, one of the most favourite words around the Legislature this time of year is "TOGA," and not in the Greco-Roman frat house tradition. It's The Ontario Greenhouse Alliance, who is here today to deliver some wonderful, fresh poinsettias to celebrate the season and to honour greenhouse growers in Ontario.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'd like to welcome The Ontario Greenhouse Alliance to the Legislature today. In the gallery, among others, is the chair, Jan VanderHout. They are a great organization, and I'm happy to see them here again today. I hope all the members will take the time to talk to them at their reception in room 228 following question period. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature today Gerry Marshall of the town of Penetanguishene. With him is Candice Moreau. She's the coordinator of the 2015 400th-anniversary-of-Champlain commemoration.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'd like to welcome Wayne Gates. He's the president of—I think it's still Local 199 Unifor, formerly CAW. Welcome, Wayne—oh, and a councillor from Niagara Falls as well.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature a constituent of mine, Jason McComb, who is raising awareness of homelessness, walking from St. Thomas to Ottawa. He's in Toronto today to say hello.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'd like to extend a warm welcome to the family of page Zachary Piette. His mother, Suzanne Piette; his grandmother, Jackie Powell; his grandfather, Harry Powell; and his sister, Katie Piette, have all joined us today in the gallery. Welcome.

Mr. Todd Smith: On behalf of my colleague the member from Burlington, I'd like to welcome Diane Beaulieu and Trisha Porter from the Halton women's shelter in Burlington to the Legislature today.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce my brother, Jim MacLaren, who is here from Calgary. He was looking for business opportunities in Ontario. He finds energy too expensive, so he's going back to Alberta.

Mr. Steve Clark: I know that members have been meeting this morning, and throughout the day, with folks from the Canadian Diabetes Association. I want to acknowledge and welcome Christine Albee, who is the director of government relations and advocacy for Ontario. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just before I go to the Minister of Children and Youth Services for a point of order, a gentle reminder that we are to introduce people only. That is the best way to do things.

Introduction of guests?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'd like to introduce Sly Castaldi, who is the executive director of Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis. I believe she's on her way in in a few minutes.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Children and Youth Services on a point of order.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: On a point of order, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear white ribbons today in support of ending violence against women.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Children and Youth Services is requesting unanimous consent to wear the white ribbons. Do we agree? Agreed.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Another point of order: the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Actually, an introduction, if I may: As you've heard, there are a number of individuals who are going to be around today from interval and transition houses across the province. I'd like to welcome Susan Young, the executive director of the association, as well as Thom Rolfe, the executive director of Hiatus House, who will be joining us today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome all our guests.

ORAL QUESTIONS

JOB CREATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, about two months ago, I sat down with Premier Wynne, and we agreed to clear the decks of legislation, because she said that was standing in the way of putting forward a jobs plan.

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Now, two months later, we see no jobs plan, but we saw significant layoffs, like 800 jobs permanently lost at Heinz in Leamington, 170 jobs at CCL in Penetanguishene, in Simcoe, and abandonment of the Ring of Fire project. You know, I hate to say this, but I regret trusting the Premier to put forward that jobs plan. I guess I should know by now not to trust Liberals, but the greater regret I have is the fact that people have now lost their jobs—38,000 manufacturing jobs since she became Premier.

So let me ask you this: We've got two weeks left in the session. Are we finally going to see your jobs plan, or are we going to see more jobs leave the province of Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question from the Leader of the Opposition, because it's high time that that side of the House supports small business by supporting the act we provided, and that's being stalled by that member and his party.

We have a three-part jobs plan. If you read the fall economic statement, it talks about what it is we're doing to create those jobs. As a result of—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I guess just asking for a blanket order does not suffice, so I will return to people's ridings.

Carry on.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As a result of the jobs plan we have, and that we've been pursuing over the last number of years, we've made strategic investments in our province to withstand the

recession, and we've weathered it better than most jurisdictions around the world, and here in North America, for that matter.

The member opposite should embrace the strong fundamentals that exist in Ontario and the hard-working families and businesses that invest in this province. We will continue to support them, and so should you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: You know, Speaker, sometimes I worry that the finance minister is little more than a nice suit, a nice smile and a briefing book. He seems to have no depth of understanding on this issue. No wonder we're in deep trouble.

Minister, you say your Bill 105 would have saved jobs at Heinz and CCL. I will remind you that you're actually increasing taxes for medium and large employers if the payroll is more than \$5 million. Correct me if I'm wrong, but wouldn't Bill 105 actually have increased taxes on companies the size of Heinz and CCL? Do you know your own legislation?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Well, there you have it, Mr. Speaker: The member opposite does not want to support an exemption to the employer health tax that will save 90% of all small businesses in this province not to be paying that tax. Ninety per cent of businesses in Ontario would be exempt from that tax. The member opposite is now saying he wouldn't support that initiative. Sixty thousand more small businesses would be exempt as a result of these initiatives.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Renfrew, come to order.

Hon. Charles Sousa: It's true, Mr. Speaker, that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Nepean—Carleton, come to order.

Hon. Charles Sousa: —will paid by big corporations. I've spoken to some of those corporations that see no problem whatsoever in supporting these initiatives. You should be supporting it as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, I guess the minister didn't have a briefing note on that topic. You know that your bill actually increases taxes. Let's think of some of the losses that, sadly, we've seen: CCL, Kellogg's, John Deere, Heinz, Cat. All of those would have had a tax increase in Bill 105.

So, Minister, I'm going to ask you to move beyond the briefing notes and actually answer from the heart. I've got a plan that will actually get hydro rates under control so that businesses will invest again in our province. I've got a plan to get taxes down to encourage investment in a new machine and a new product line and hire men and women again. I've got a plan to clear aside the red tape, the hassle, the runaround to reduce the regulatory burden by at least a third. I've got a plan to put people into good jobs they can count on: middle-class comfort and security, permanent jobs, not temporary job to temporary job.

I've got a plan, so let's get going. All I'm asking you is, where the hell is yours?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

I would ask the leader to withdraw.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite wants us to speak from the heart. I can tell you this: The plan that's being provided and proposed by the member opposite is a slash-and-burn policy that's going to create havoc and make it very difficult for our economy to grow and, more importantly, to sustain those businesses.

The member opposite makes claims about increased taxes. The fact of the matter is: Supporting small businesses—in the end, the net result is that it's not fully offset. We do recognize that we need to create more jobs and build our economy.

This is their plan, Mr. Speaker: Their plan calls to fire 10,000 education workers. Their plan calls to fire 2,000 health care workers. Their plan will cancel infrastructure projects across the province. They will drive down wages with their harmful right-to-work-less legislation. Their plan is to fight.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the finance minister. I mean, what a pathetic answer from the finance minister. Three chances to tell us what his plan is, or at least when it's forthcoming. I take part of the blame myself. I did trust you. I trusted the Premier to bring forward a jobs plan when I said I would clear the decks. But let me tell you what's happened since. So 800 men and women lose their jobs in Leamington, Ontario. Heinz ketchup, that was made in Ontario for 100 years, will now be made in the United States of America. This is devastating to those communities. We saw CCL on Friday laying off, closing down, 170 jobs in Penetanguishene. The Ring of Fire is gone.

So when Leamington lost that environment, that job creation dynamo in Heinz, what was your response? You brought forward legislation to ban smoking on patios. When we lost the Ring of Fire project, what was your response? To get Al Gore to pat you on the back for the very same policies that drove hydro rates through the roof. When are you going to bring forward a plan, or is it simply time to change the team that leads, to put forward a jobs plan that will put men and women back into good-paying jobs—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister of Finance?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, our plan has been clearly laid out in our fall economic statement. Unlike the member opposite, we believe that we need to make those investments in our people. We recognize there's a skills

shortage among certain sectors of our economy that we have attracted. We need to fill them. That's why we need to invest in them. We also recognize that we need to invest in modern infrastructure. Those strategic initiatives will enable us to have a 100,000 more new jobs in the province. And we will also do everything possible to maintain a dynamic business climate by maintaining our tax systems low relative to the other jurisdictions around North America and the world.

The fact of the matter is there is investment coming to Ontario. The fact of the matter is we have over 470,000 net new jobs since the recession. The fact of the matter is the initiatives that we've taken are working, and the member opposite doesn't see the need to make those investments, and that's worrisome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, I'm not going to argue that the finance minister has added 300,000 jobs to the government payroll. I just think we need a healthy, thriving private sector to rebuild our middle class, and if people are working, they pay taxes to support health and education.

The problem is—and I believe you've got this in your briefing binder somewhere—we've lost 38,000 manufacturing jobs under Premier Wynne alone. We've lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs under the McGuinty-Wynne government. This is our middle class. I remember growing up in the north end of Fort Erie on Lindbergh Drive. Most of the moms and dads and my friends worked at the factory; they worked at the plant and built our middle class. It was the backbone of communities that I call home. You've broken that backbone. You hollowed out our manufacturing sector and you haven't got a clue how to turn it around. We do: Get energy rates under control. Get taxes down. Clear aside the regulatory barriers. Modernize our labour laws.

We've got a plan for 300,000 manufacturing jobs to rebuild our communities. I ask you, why don't you?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please.

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, this is not about more government. In fact, our government has been scaling down the size of government. It's about more opportunity—opportunity that the opposition member is trying to take away. That is their claim to their purpose: Take it away, while some of the other members of the House want to just give it away.

We have to be cognizant and balanced in our approach. Here, I'll read something that a member of the Conservative Party, who was the leader of that party, says. He says, "There are business people who will say the last thing we need right now is a sort of war between the unions and businesses or the government in an economy that is just slowly recovering. I happen to believe they are right, and I don't think it's constructive right now." He says further, "I think it's probably the wrong thing to be advocating, and I don't even think it's going

to be that good for the economy.” That’s John Tory, who opposes individuals who want to fight unions, Mr. Speaker. We have to work collaboratively, in partnership.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

Final supplementary.

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Mr. Tim Hudak: I pointed out in my opening question that two months ago, I put my trust in Premier Wynne and the Liberals to bring forward a jobs plan. Two months later, we’ve lost more jobs, and it seems like daily there’s sad news across our province of more layoffs. And after five questions, Speaker, the finance minister does nothing but play silly games. He has not brought forward any kind of jobs plan, and I fear that he won’t as we head into the Christmas break in three weeks’ time.

When we look at your legislative agenda, you’ve found importance in who can access a tanning bed. You’ve found importance around water cooler salesmen. You’ve found importance in whether you can smoke on a patio or not. My priority is jobs, getting our economy moving again and getting hydro rates under control.

So is this the extent of your legislative agenda? And if it is, let me ask you, which one of those bills—the tanning beds, the smoking legislation or the one on water heaters—which one of those would have made Cliffs and the Ring of Fire a reality to fire up our economy? Which one of your plans would have helped bring good, well-paying jobs to northern Ontario, southern Ontario and to the oil sands in the province of Ontario when it comes to job creation?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, let me respond by advising the member, who obviously hasn’t read the fall economic statement, or the budget previously, that we have a three-point plan to invest in people by creating a youth jobs strategy. That’s \$275 million for 30,000 more jobs. We are advocating for our seniors and our consumers by fighting for their protection. We’re investing \$35 billion over the next three years by building infrastructure. We’re bringing forward green bonds and a new Trillium Trust. We’re promoting our AFP process. We’re investing in our electricity grid that they neglected for so many years, so that we can be competitive.

We are investing in our business climate. We’re cutting taxes on small business, and we’ve brought forward legislation this fall, Bill 105, that will help small businesses. You now are saying that you’re not supporting it. Say that to your business people and—how they feel that the opposition, who claim to fight for small business, is now creating and stalling its ability.

MINING INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. People worried about finding good jobs in this province were dismayed to see yet another company

walk away from Ontario last week. Can the Acting Premier tell us what deal the government made with Cliffs Natural Resources and whether the government held up their end of that deal, Speaker?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the opportunities in the Ring of Fire and in our mineral deposits in the Far North are tremendous, and we will continue to support and do everything possible to invest in that initiative.

There are a number of proponents that are continuing to be interested in the development of the Ring of Fire. We are going to continue to do what’s necessary, and we have established a development corporation to that effect. We have a number of proponents, and we’re asking the federal government to partner in these initiatives, as they should, the same way they’ve done it for Alberta and for New Brunswick and Newfoundland. We have to make certain that we invest in those initiatives, and we will, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, in May 2012, the finance minister confirmed that the Ontario government had reached an initial agreement or a term sheet with Cliffs regarding plans to process chromite in Capreol. Will the Acting Premier make that agreement public today?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the proponent that has been involved in the negotiation—there have been others—has made their decision. It’s going to be continuing. As a government, we’ll continue to seek the best value for Ontarians. We’re asking the federal government to partner with us. We want to ensure that we do the smelting and the fabricating of the mineral resources, so we can produce stainless steel here in Ontario. All of this is part of our ability to take advantage of the Far North.

We also want to be able to work effectively and collaboratively with the First Nations and the aboriginal peoples who are affected by this initiative. That’s why we also need the federal government to partner with us.

We’ll continue to drive forward. We’ll continue to look at what’s necessary to provide for an all-weather road and a spine to the north, to enable that development, Mr. Speaker. We’ll continue to do our part.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, in May 2012, the government reached a term sheet with Cliffs Natural Resources. The question I’m asking is, can the Acting Premier at least—if they’re not going to tell us what that term sheet said, if they’re not going to make that term sheet public, can they at least tell us whether or not they actually kept their side of the agreement or were there terms that the government actually failed to meet?

Hon. Charles Sousa: There are ongoing discussions with the proponent and others. We will continue to do what’s necessary. The member opposite knows full well the sensitivities around these discussions and these negotiations.

We have always stated that the federal government needs to partner in these initiatives. There are billions of

dollars of opportunity available to us. The feds have not come forward with support for Ontario, which we need in order to take advantage of these mineral deposits.

We will continue to do our part, as I've stated already, and I'm optimistic that the opportunities continue to exist, because there is so much more interest still available to the area. We'll try to develop it as best we can.

MINING INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Acting Premier. Transportation infrastructure is a huge challenge for bringing jobs to the Ring of Fire. Can the Acting Premier confirm that the government signed a commitment around creating a road and, if so, what was that commitment?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The development of the Ring of Fire is going to require a lot of input from the federal partners, from the aboriginal and First Nations people and from the areas that are implicated—the municipalities. We recognize that an all-weather road is going to be necessary to make it so.

There is also going to be a lot of work in regard to energy submissions, and we will continue to do that, but we're having those discussions. In order for us to develop that, we need to have a partnership with the federal government as well.

We'll continue to do our part. We've invested, and we've actually started to highlight what's necessary. The proponents recognize the potential; we will do our best to ensure that it's developed.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: People across Ontario were promised thousands of jobs—those were this Liberal government's words, “thousands of jobs”—but when it comes to actually showing the public what the government did or didn't do to deliver on that promise, we can't get a straight answer.

It's been clear that the Liberals have failed to put in place the framework needed to take advantage of the Ring of Fire. Whether it's energy, roads or helping First Nations find common ground with business, the government has failed on every single count. All the while, Liberal ministers were holding press conferences and claiming that everything was just fine.

Why can't the Acting Premier share some basic information about agreements the government signed on behalf of the people of Ontario?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Our government is moving forward with development of the Ring of Fire. We are continuing to do that. We have put forward a development corporation. We have discussions that are being made with First Nations, the Métis nations and the aboriginal people. We had discussions with various proponents, not just one.

We are trying to persuade the federal government of the importance of this development, just as it's been important for the development of other regions of Canada, like Alberta, Newfoundland and New Brunswick. On-

tario deserves the same degree of attention and investment, because there are \$60 billion of opportunity, not only for Ontario, but for all of Canada.

The member opposite is asking us to provide and divulge sensitive commercial negotiations. That's improper, and that is exactly why they would put it at risk. We will not put our province at risk in these discussions. We're going to do everything necessary to move forward with the Ring of Fire.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: We know that Cliffs is only one of several companies interested in the Ring of Fire, but now people are wondering how many other companies are having the same kind of trouble with the Liberals that drove away Cliffs.

There aren't just mining jobs in northern Ontario that are at stake here. There is the potential for processing jobs and refining jobs that could mean jobs in Sudbury, jobs in Hamilton and jobs in Thunder Bay, but that requires a plan.

The government won't share the details of their bungled deal with Cliffs. Can the Acting Premier tell us his plan to work with other companies in the Ring of Fire, so that maybe Ontario can realize some of those jobs that the government likes to carp about?

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Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, it is essential that we take the opportunities that exist in the Far North in a very pragmatic and strategic way. We've established a development corporation to look into the best way to provide value for Ontario. We've had ongoing discussions with a number of proponents. We are doing exactly what is necessary to provide for the smelting and the processing here in Ontario. We recognize the obvious that she is proposing. What's not so obvious is getting to that opportunity in a very essential strategic and pragmatic way for Ontario.

We need the federal government to partner with us on these initiatives as well. I reaffirm the importance of that region to all of Canada as well as Ontario. We need to move forward in partnership on this issue.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning. My question is for the Acting Premier. We have cleared the legislative decks so you can finally bring out your plan to create and stimulate the economy. Instead, what do we get? A 1-800 number for pets and a new no-smoking policy.

High taxes, mounds of red tape and triple hydro rates do not provide an open-for-business climate. Your lack of vision and hope has sent Ontario businesses packing. Xstrata Copper, Caterpillar, US Steel, Heinz, and now Cliffs Natural Resources pulling out of the greatest opportunity in a generation, the Ring of Fire—all gone.

Will you finally admit that you're taking us down the wrong path and adopt the PC Party plan to bring jobs and wealth back to the province of Ontario?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member opposite wants to give the impression that the people of Ontario and all the businesses that continue to invest in Ontario, the work that is being done to promote our economic recovery, which, by the way, exceeds all other jurisdictions around the world, including North America—he's putting them down. Our people are working hard. We are trying to partner as much as we can to promote that economic growth.

Their answer? Cut everything, slash it all, take it away; because they don't believe in investing in our people, investing in infrastructure and supporting businesses. That is not deserving of their approach; it is of ours. We believe in the people of Ontario and in the business of Ontario. That's why we'll invest in them and that's why we'll take these initiatives to support them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Acting Premier, it's not as if these jobs that are leaving Ontario are disappearing completely; they're just disappearing from Ontario. They've been resurfacing elsewhere. Xstrata Copper, 672 jobs resurfaced in the province of Quebec; Caterpillar has resurfaced in Indiana; Heinz in Ohio. Will you wake up over there? The jobs and investment are fleeing Ontario. The business world is sending you a very clear message: Stop blaming it on the recession. The other provinces have recovered, the US is in recovery, and now these guys are eating our lunch. Don't you think you've created enough jobs for the United States?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. I'm not seeking quiet for the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke to add his two cents' worth; he does that enough. Thank you.

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member opposite suggests that we should wake up. I would say to him, wake up and recognize the importance that Ontario has made and done for the people and for the businesses of Ontario. We've actually exceeded those very jurisdictions that he's just talked about, and we'll continue to do that.

My question to him, however, is, why are you not supporting small businesses with the bill that we brought forward to support them? You're holding that up. They are creating uncertainty, and that hurts small businesses. That's creating more red tape. This is about cutting their taxes, so wake up and support small businesses.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Speaker, 740 people will be out of work in Leamington and 46 area tomato growers will lose a significant contract because of this government's inaction on preserving and protecting Ontario jobs, inaction on reducing industrial hydro rates,

inaction on creating real incentives for capital investment and inaction on training. The list of what this government hasn't done to create and preserve jobs is endless. When is this government going to get serious about preserving good-paying jobs that are the lifeblood of Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We are working to create jobs in this province. The Southwestern Ontario Development Fund and the Eastern Ontario Development Fund alone have created and retained more than 22,000 jobs since their creation.

Our youth jobs initiative, the youth employment fund, which is an employer incentive, has already resulted, in just a couple of months, in more than 3,000 placements for young people in this province.

There's our investment with the Ford Motor Company as well, just a couple of months ago. A \$70-million investment by the province along with the federal government is creating and retaining almost 3,000 jobs at that location.

In fact, our auto sector is having the best year on record in terms of sales in Canada. We've created in the auto sector, Mr. Speaker, about 15,000 net new jobs since the bottom of the recession and, of course, that's part of the nearly 500,000 jobs—not in the public sector, as the PCs would like to say: 100% of those jobs are full-time jobs, and 80% of those jobs are in the private sector.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The words "too little, too late" come to mind when I listen to the minister's response. Three hundred thousand manufacturing jobs have been lost while this government has been sitting idly by, rather than getting industrial electricity costs under control. For years, one jurisdiction after another has implemented targeted tax credits for investment, training and job creation while this government has done absolutely nothing.

The Premier's admission that more job losses are coming is extremely worrying for people across Ontario. When is this government going to table a real job-creation plan to begin to make up for the 300,000—300,000—good-paying jobs that have left this province under their watch?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The member opposite focuses on the 300,000 job losses in the manufacturing sector over the last decade. We believe in our manufacturing sector. We believe in the nearly one million people who are working in that sector today. It's a different sector, Mr. Speaker; it's changing. We know that the global circumstances are challenging, and we're adapting to those circumstances as well.

The Premier, the member from Windsor West and myself were in Leamington on Friday. We met with the local leadership, business leaders and union representatives of the individuals involved, to work with them to develop a plan to hopefully save that opportunity that is so important for that community in Leamington. So we are investing in our communities.

I think it's important that all of us in this Legislature not denigrate our manufacturing sector but speak about the possibilities and the opportunities and the expansion

that is taking place. We look for ways to continue to help, including improving and increasing their trade overseas.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: This morning I've got a question for the Attorney General. In September, the minister announced that a tentative settlement had been reached in the Huronia Regional Centre class action. Some of the former residents of Huronia would like to access their files so they can apply under the settlement.

Would the minister please tell the House how these former residents may be able to get access to the files they need?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, as you know, we've reached a tentative settlement that we hope will be finalized on December 3. It's before the courts right now, and we believe that the settlement is a fair and reasonable one for all concerned.

We have acted to ensure that the residents of Huronia will have access to their files as soon as possible. As a matter of fact, I've strongly directed my ministry officials to work with the Ministry of Community and Social Services to make sure that those records will be available to those individuals, who have suffered enough in their lives. Speaker, that's happening as we speak. Those directions were given some time ago. I know there's some concern about that, but we will make sure that every resident will get the access to the records that they want.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I thank the Attorney General for that answer, obviously. But Mr. Speaker, I understand that this settlement is going to go before the courts on December 3 for the court's approval. I know that former residents of Huronia want access to their personal information and files as quickly as possible.

Those seeking their information sometimes don't seem to know where to go and are being told their files may be kept in different parts, in different ministries, of the government. This, to me, seems to be pretty unfair. It seems to be unduly complicated, and it makes life very difficult for these residents.

Speaker, would the minister please tell us, when will the former residents be able to begin to access their files?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, the former residents have to be an integral part of the settlement process. It's absolutely necessary.

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They have one contact that they can make through the Ministry of Community and Social Services. They can contact Cate Parker at 416-327-6101 for assistance in accessing their records. Those records will be made available without any fees being charged at all. They are entitled to their records. Instructions have been given that those records be handed over to those residents.

We are doing whatever we can in order to make sure that the tentative settlement that was reached in September is finalized on December 3, because this case will be a template with respect to the other similar settlements

that we hope to arrange with respect to Southwestern Regional and Rideau Regional. These people have a right to know and have a right to access to their records.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Acting Premier. Last week, the Premier visited Leamington after Heinz announced it would be closing a plant. The Premier announced a small amount of money with no plan. In fact, she made an announcement in Windsor before telling the people of Leamington. I know the Premier doesn't know much about rural Ontario, but Windsor is almost an hour from Leamington.

The Premier's visit has done little to reassure the thousands of workers and growers and all of the families affected by the closure. One warehouse operator told me that he'll lose over \$1 million because of the closure.

When I invited the Premier to Leamington in an open letter, I thought she was going to meet with the real people affected by Heinz leaving town. Instead, she staged a photo op with dignitaries.

Will the Premier apologize for last Friday's photo op, and apologize to the people of Leamington for Liberal policies that are devastating my rural town?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I can't believe what I'm hearing from the member opposite. I'll tell you why: Last week, when I became aware that the Premier and I—and, obviously, the member from Windsor West—would be meeting with the good people of Leamington, with the political leadership, with the union representatives and with business people on the farm side and the non-farm supply chain, I immediately went to the member opposite and invited him to that meeting.

That meeting that he attended was obviously important enough to him to attend, and now he's describing it as a photo op. He was happy to be part of that photo op, that meeting which was so important, to announce Communities in Transition funds, which is a first step—that first \$200,000—so we could collectively develop a plan for that community so they could see their way forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Again, to the Acting Premier: The impact that the closure will have on Leamington's economy is massive, but nowhere close to the pain being felt by the families of Heinz employees. In Leamington, it's common for many generations of families to have worked for Heinz. Retired employees collecting their pensions from Heinz are worried about what happens next. Folks who were about to retire are worried about their future. Leamington's young people who were just starting their careers or saving up for school will be forced to look elsewhere. Families are scared, and they're pulling up roots and leaving Ontario.

You owe them an apology. Acting Premier, will you and the Premier apologize for crushing the hopes of Leamington's young people and for driving families away from Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: On this side, we're not going to apologize for working hard on behalf of the people of Leamington. We expect that the member opposite will apologize for that comment. He knows completely well that, before that announcement was made, I was on the phone with the mayor of Leamington; I've spoken with him numerous times. My staff have been in touch with the member opposite probably on a daily basis. That meeting last Friday was so important to the people of Leamington.

We need to take the politics out of this. We need to make sure that we're providing everything we can for the people of Leamington. I know how devastating it is to that local community, not just for the workers at that factory but for the entire community. The people who work on the farms and in supply are part of that supply chain—and the non-farm people.

I'm committed to doing everything humanly possible to help those people, and I expect the member opposite to do the same.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

CHILD CARE CENTRES

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Minister of Education. Unlicensed daycare inspections in Ontario have revealed a troubling number of violations: children sleeping in damp, airless rooms in soggy bedding or sitting in broken, unsanitary high chairs. What's worse, on November 13, there was another reported death of a nine-month-old toddler in an unlicensed daycare in Markham. This death, along with the death of Eva Ravikovich in Vaughan this year and the many others before her, are a troubling example of the policy this government is following in regard to unlicensed daycares.

Inspecting only when there's a complaint is too late and is resulting in tragic deaths. When will the minister act and provide some oversight of unlicensed daycares in Ontario so that parents can be sure that when they send their children to daycare that day, they will be well cared for?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I don't think we've had a question since the unfortunate death of the little baby girl. I can't think of anything more devastating than to lose an infant, so our hearts go out to the parents in this circumstance. In that particular case, I understand that the police automatically investigate whenever there is an infant death. My Ministry of Education officials have been working with the police and the coroner's office in that investigation. We have no further information. Obviously it is a matter that's actively under investigation to try and determine the cause of death. But we certainly do look forward to tabling new legislation which will—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: Back to the Minister of Education: There were 300 complaints to your ministry about unlicensed child care in the year before two-year-old Eva Ravikovich died in an illegal home daycare that was found to be filthy and overcrowded in Vaughan last July. You admitted that your ministry had not followed up on all complaints and now, while the Ombudsman is conducting an investigation into these serious allegations, another death of an innocent child.

The time to act is now. Will you, as the minister responsible for these children, bring oversight to unlicensed daycares in Ontario instead of ignoring complaints?

Hon. Liz Sandals: We have worked with our complaints people since then in terms of improving responsiveness to complaints. In fact, we are in the process of setting up a dedicated enforcement team to deal with the complaints to make sure that there is consistency and quick response in terms of reacting to the complaints.

We are also in the process of setting up a website so that parents can check and see, when they are considering a child care provider, if there is any record of complaint against that particular provider—substantiated complaints. In the interim, parents can call the Ministry of Education and check and see, if they're considering a private home daycare provider, whether there have been any—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I am pleased to rise in the House today. My question is for the minister responsible for women's issues.

Violence against women is a serious issue that does not discriminate. Its victims can be poor or rich, educated or not, of any background. Intimate partner violence has been consistently identified as one of the most common forms of violence against women. Sadly, Statistics Canada indicates that over 6% of Ontario women have experienced domestic violence in the past five years.

It's important in my community of Scarborough-Guildwood and across Ontario that the government continues to play an active role in preventing violence against women. Can the minister inform the House what this government has done to raise awareness and prevent violence against women?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: I'd like to thank the member from Scarborough-Guildwood for her question and her advocacy on this important issue, one that we all know is still a timely issue that we continue to be engaged in.

1120

Mr. Speaker, today marks the United Nations' International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. I'd like to thank all the members in the House for wearing white ribbons and showing their support for this important day.

Our government believes it is every woman's fundamental right to live safely and securely in her home

and community, and we've backed up that belief with programs and policies aimed at ending violence against women. Our Domestic Violence Action Plan has raised awareness and strengthened both supports to victims and the justice system's response to these acts. Our Sexual Violence Action Plan works with community organizations to implement public education and training initiatives aimed at ending sexual violence. These important initiatives demonstrate our government's continuing commitment towards preventing women's abuse.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Minister, for that answer. I'm also pleased and would like to thank all members for wearing the white ribbons in a show of support for ending violence against women, and hopefully it spawns conversations that this must stop.

I'm pleased to hear that our government has taken action to prevent domestic and sexual violence against women. I know that these initiatives are having a positive impact on our local communities. Unfortunately, these acts of violence still do occur. When they do, women need to know that there are supports available to help them in their time of need. Our government has an important role to play in supporting and providing supports for abused women, with adequate levels of support. Minister, what is our government doing to support women who have been victims of violence?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you, again. Speaker, we have taken action to strengthen support for women who are victims of violence. Since 2003, we have increased funding by 48% for community services that help victims of domestic violence. The funding has helped serve close to 12,000 women and 8,000 children in emergency shelters just last year.

We also continue to fund a program that provides employment training for abused and at-risk women. We know that economic security is closely tied to a woman's ability to leave an abusive partner. Since 2005, 1,800 women have built new lives for themselves and their families through this training. We've provided training to over 30,000 front-line workers to teach them how to recognize the signs of domestic violence.

We know there's more work to be done, Speaker. We remain committed to this issue, to working with our communities, our agencies and our employers to ensure that women remain safe.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question today is for the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment. On Friday, we learned that CCL Container in Penetanguishene is closing its doors and heading to Mexico—170 more manufacturing jobs lost here in Ontario. It must be difficult for you to stand here every day and attempt to defend a government that only creates jobs in the public sector. Minister, we have to stop the exodus of good manufacturing and mining jobs to our southern neighbours. It's that simple.

So my question, Minister, is, when will you think outside the box and create policies that will actually create employment in the private sector? When will you listen to Tim Hudak and the PC caucus and listen to our policies?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. With regards to CCL, of course, this is very difficult and unfortunate news for the workers and the families that are affected by these layoffs. It always is, Mr. Speaker, and I think we should remember that if there's ever a time that we should be non-partisan and make efforts to ensure that we do everything possible for these workers, including through my colleague the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, to provide job search and retraining opportunities for people across the province who unfortunately do lose their jobs—we need to invest in that. Obviously, we need to continue to do everything that we can to promote manufacturing in this province.

I remind people in this Legislature that there are roughly 800,000 people who are employed in manufacturing, and there are many cases where expansion is taking place and job creation is taking place. And that's contributing, in part, to the 500,000 full-time—80% of them in the private sector—jobs that we've created since the bottom of the recession.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Minister, maybe you can explain that answer to the mayor of the town of Penetanguishene, who's here today, and to the 170 families that won't have a very merry Christmas this year.

Ridiculous hydro rates, along with the global adjustment, excessive red tape and regulations in your environment and labour ministries, and a new boondoggle called the College of Trades are driving jobs and families away from our province. They should rename your ministry "the ministry of job losses and job creation in Mexico and the USA."

So it's another 170 jobs going to Mexico. Can you explain to the House today why any private sector company would ever set up in Ontario with your dismal policies?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The difference between this side of the House and that, the official opposition, is that we don't denigrate our manufacturers and the employees who work with them. We believe in supporting them. In fact, the policy of the PC Party back in 2008 was not to support the auto sector. If the PC Party had had their way those years ago, we wouldn't have GM and we wouldn't have Chrysler in this province at all. The response and the policy of the PC Party a year ago, when we voted to create the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund, which together with the Eastern Ontario Development Fund has created and retained 22,000 jobs—that party opposite voted against it. The party opposite also voted against our \$300-million youth jobs strategy, which has placed 3,000 people in jobs already.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm not taking any lessons from the party opposite. Their policy is not to support our manufacturers and not to support our employers.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. New question.

RETIREMENT HOMES

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the minister responsible for seniors. In 2010, the Liberal government assured Ontarians that their regulatory scheme for retirement homes would finally offer the protection that seniors desperately need. Yet instead of moving forward with a strong system of protection, the government chose to bring forward a regulatory system that was filled with loopholes and problems. Seniors like those who are living at the In Touch retirement home continue to be the ones paying the price for this lack of oversight, as the Toronto Star continues to document.

Will the minister finally take action to protect these seniors?

Hon. Mario Sergio: Let me thank the member for her question. Let me say this: Every senior in Ontario deserves to be living with dignity and respect in a safe and secure environment. That is why the province of Ontario was the first one to regulate every retirement home in Ontario. As of today, within some 700 retirement homes, 689 are already within the law. They are operating with the proper licence.

Let me say that the In Touch residential home was living completely out of touch. We have taken all the necessary action within the guidelines—the standards—of the Retirement Homes Act. We have been on top of this house continually. That is why the tribunal agreed with us to take away the licence from this particular house.

It is our belief—it is mine; it is the one of this government—that every senior in Ontario deserves the best, and we are doing the very best because every house is being regulated.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: This government isn't doing their very best, and they are out of touch when it comes to seniors' issues.

The Toronto Star has been raising alarm bells about the fact that even when a retirement home operator loses its licence, there is still nothing in the legislation that allows follow-up of this order or a smooth transfer of residents to a better home. The Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority registrar, Mary Beth Valentine, is quoted in the Star saying, "There is a clear problem with the legislation in that it does not require (follow-up) and it does put us in a more difficult situation."

Does the minister have a plan to protect these vulnerable seniors, or will he allow them to languish in unsafe conditions or even face homelessness?

Hon. Mario Sergio: It is very sad that after everything we have done for our seniors, with the legislation that we have introduced and passed—we were the first province to introduce legislation to combat elder abuse. We have instituted a zero policy. We have approved and installed in every retirement home the residents' bill of

rights. It is very sad. That is why the tribunal has agreed with us and this shows—Speaker, it's sending a very strong and direct message to every member of the House and to every retirement home out there that our system and our laws are working, and that is why we are here today: to protect our seniors.

1130

I will continue to take a look at the present legislation. It may not be the best in the world, but let me remind the member and every member of this House that it's very fresh. It has been in operation for merely one year, and we have come a long way in providing our seniors with the best protection there is. We are very proud and I'm very proud that we'll continue to provide the best care for our seniors—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Government Services. Modern technology makes it possible to share ideas and information faster than ever before. In my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt, I regularly hear from residents talking about the need for governments to engage with the public in entirely new and more meaningful ways. It's my understanding that improving citizens' engagement and increasing dialogue with Ontario residents is a priority for this government.

In October, the Premier and the Minister of Government Services announced our Open Government Initiative. As part of this initiative, the engagement team will be travelling Ontario and hearing from citizens.

Speaker, through you to the minister, can he describe the engagement process, some of the places the team will be visiting and the work that has been done to date by the team?

Hon. John Milloy: I thank the member for her question. It is very important that we look at new ways of engaging Ontarians on many of the challenges that are facing our province.

As members know, through the Premier, we invited renowned experts and innovative thinkers to be part of the Open Government engagement team. The team members were chosen because of their individual expertise and talent. They are engaging with the public in a variety of ways, including using digital tools and traditional face-to-face town hall meetings around the province.

In fact, one of these meetings is being held today at Ryerson University here in Toronto. The Open Government engagement team will meet in the Digital Media Zone from 6 to 9 p.m. People can register for the event at opengov@ontario.ca or they can just show up. These consultations will help inform the team's report, which will include recommendations for the implementation of Open Government initiatives in Ontario, and we hope to make the report public next spring.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: I thank the minister for that response. It looks like Ontario is embracing Open Government. This will mean that our government will be more responsive and accessible to the people of this province. I know that across the province, residents are pleased to see government being more open, accessible and responsive.

I understand that the Open Government engagement team is made up of leading thinkers, innovators and members of the tech community. Speaker, through you to the minister, can he share with the House the credentials of the engagement team members?

Hon. John Milloy: We have a very talented group, including Dr. Don Lenihan; he's the chair of the team. He's an internationally recognized expert on democracy and public engagement, accountability and service delivery. He is an adviser and educator to senior public servants and a prolific author.

Another member, Leslie Church, leads global communications and public affairs for Google Canada.

David Eaves, another member, works with companies and government on strategy and innovation. He has been invited to speak to or consult for organizations like Code for America, the White House Presidential Innovation Fellows, and the World Bank.

Of course, members will know Norm Sterling, a former member of this Legislature, a cabinet minister and someone who is intimately involved in the development of our province's access to information system.

Ray Sharma, another member, is the founder and president of XMG Studio Inc., Canada's largest independent mobile games developer. I don't have time here to describe all the members of the team, but I think you get the flavour of who's on that team. We look forward to their work and their report.

TEACHERS

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is for the Minister of Education. While the NDP continues to stand behind the Premier's wrong-headed approach to teacher hiring, the PCs stand alone in wanting a fair and transparent process that ensures that principals can hire the best teachers for our students.

One principal from Sudbury says the following: "I've had to hire people that I would have otherwise not selected. I've missed out on the chance to bring first-rate people in because they don't sit in the 'top five' eligible candidates list. We're a small board, so word gets around quickly as to who is a five-star candidate and who is not. I find it counter-intuitive that we would accept any policy that would inhibit us from putting who we assess to be the best possible candidate in front of students." This is from a principal in Sudbury.

Can the Minister of Education tell Ontario principals why she does not trust them to put the best teachers in front of our students?

Hon. Liz Sandals: We actually value our principals. Our principals are absolutely key to the education sys-

tem. When principals are leading their schools, as you well know, Speaker, they are actually the key to turning around schools, to make sure that schools have a safe and accepting school climate. Absolutely, the work that our principals do in schools is key.

In fact, we have worked with our principals over the last six or eight months to come to agreements with our principals' associations. We are currently doing a study with our principals on principal workload and professionalism. So we, in fact, have a very warm relationship with our principals.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rob Leone: Mr. Speaker, since the minister doesn't think that principals are up to the job, she should listen to parents. One principal from Ottawa writes the following regarding regulation 274: "Parents are justifiably angry. They have no patience for the length of time it takes to fill a vacancy. HR cannot keep up with the demands this mandate puts on them."

Minister, it might surprise you, but parents want to be able to have a say in which teachers are in front of their kids. The collective bargaining process that you have outlined in Bill 122 shuts out the concerns of parents. Parents know what's best for their children, yet you're not giving them an outlet to express their concerns through their MPPs.

This is not simply about your stance on regulation 274. It's the message that your stance sends to parents, principals and new teachers alike. Minister, reconsider that stance. Repeal regulation 274, or the PC caucus has no reason to support Bill 122.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Now we get to the heart of the matter. We have the government opposite, or the party opposite, that's on record as saying that they don't want to work with unions, refusing to support collective bargaining legislation that will improve the relationship with both employer boards and unions. So we now get to the heart of it.

They're hiding behind reg 274, which my critic says we snuck into legislation. Again, I think they have a challenge with reading, Speaker, because the legislation, which they supported, said that it would implement the MOU signed with OECTA, and if they had read the MOU that was signed with OECTA, they would have seen that it had the wording in reg 274 embedded in it. They voted for it.

HOME WARRANTY PROGRAM

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Minister of Consumer Services. Most of the Taron Warranty Corp.'s funding comes from Ontario's homeowners, but Taron does not answer to consumers; it answers to the developers it is supposed to regulate. Taron spends consumer money on lawyers in order to fight consumers at the Licence Appeal Tribunal while protecting builders.

Taron has a CEO, a COO and nine vice-presidents but, as far as we can tell, zero proper building inspectors. The average compensation at Taron is over \$100,000 per

year, and Taroni even uses consumer enrolment fees to host an annual awards banquet that celebrates builders.

My question is, is Taroni another Ornge? If not, will the government make Taroni open up its books and prove it?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I thank the member opposite for the question. I just want to acknowledge, and I believe the member opposite knows, that Taroni has made substantial changes to its operations in consumer protection in recent years. But I do acknowledge there's always room for improvement, and I expect Taroni to continue to look for ways to improve customer service.

It has committed to providing new ways to be transparent and increase the value of information that they provide. I have met with Taroni leadership. Speaker, it's very important to note that very recently, Taroni made changes to its operations. In fact, it changed the board composition such that it's now equal as to industry and consumer reps.

I'll continue to work with Taroni very closely to make sure that they provide the best possible customer service to their clients, the people who are warrantied under this program.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The only change this government has made in 37 years, seven or eight years ago, was to add four appointees by the government. That's the only change you made. Nothing else has happened. It's still controlled by developers. Taroni is the only delegated authority with the power to create its own regulations without government approval—the only one.

The province forces homebuyers to buy warranty protection from Taroni but does nothing to ensure that consumers get value for their money. The Ontario Ombudsman cannot investigate Taroni, and the Auditor General cannot investigate Taroni. When will the minister reform Taroni into an agency that protects consumers instead of builders?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Speaker, my understanding is that when the NDP were in power, they did nothing to reform Taroni.

Let's look at what this government has done to reform Taroni. We formed a new consumer advisory council; we created the role of the new homebuyer ombudsperson, to create an independent review for homeowners; and we made changes to the major structural defect warranty in the three-to-seven-year category.

The member knows that, as an independent, not-for-profit corporation that does not receive government funding—the new home warranty act does not provide the authority to request an audit. However, if this Legislature determines that the Auditor General should be asked to provide a third party audit of some kind, I will of course respect the will of the Legislature and I will fully welcome the recommendations of a report.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1141 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Introduction of guests. Introduction of guests. Introduction of guests. Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was stalling, hoping they would arrive. I have a group from my riding, from Forest Heights Collegiate, that is with us today at Queen's Park. I met with them at lunchtime, and they'll be joining us in the gallery any moment, so I'd like to welcome them to the Legislature.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TEACHERS

Mr. Rob Leone: I want to take some time today to recognize three teachers from Waterloo region—one from my riding of Cambridge—who bravely stood up and did the right thing earlier this year.

When unions were demanding that their teachers strike and work to rule, these teachers chose to focus on what was best for the students. They chose to uphold the honour of their profession, rather than succumbing to the bullying tactics of so-called "solidarity." At a time when bullying has become a focus of real concern in the province and in the country, these teachers chose to stand up to the intimidating forces around them and stand by the values of a profession in which they take pride.

Unfortunately, the union leadership did not see it that way. It was recently reported that these teachers would be punished through public shaming. If naming and shaming these teachers, who have the strength of character to stand for what's right, isn't bullying, I don't know what is. What kind of lesson is this reaction teaching our kids who observe it?

Good teachers are so important to our education system in this province. We all know, as former students and as parents, how much of an impact good teaching can have on our lives and our futures. These Waterloo region teachers chose to be role models for their students, prioritizing learning in the classroom over political posturing, and for that, I want to sincerely thank them.

POLAR SPLASH

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I rise today to recognize a pretty cool event that took place in my hometown of Belle River over the weekend. The fifth annual Polar Splash took place at the Belle River Beach, proceeds benefitting the Community Support Centre and the Lakeshore Community Food Bank. Their mission is to give hope to each and every person affected by disability, unemployment or stress, to provide a wraparound approach to community care.

In 2009, the first annual Polar Splash dip took place. They raised \$7,000. In 2010, as their clientele grew past Lakeshore and Essex, they expanded the community

support to bring seniors together to share lunches and soup twice a week. In 2011, they celebrated 28 years by introducing a new program, including the rollout of a countywide dialysis transportation model. And in 2012, their hours of service went up 13,000 from the previous year, to over 53,000.

While other service groups' budgets' administrative costs go as high as 27%, Community Support Centre's is around 4.1% of their budget, making them a tremendously effective deliverer of public service and support services in our community.

I want to thank and congratulate all the participants who took the brave dip into the frigid waters of Lake St. Clair—it was quite icy—and congratulate the organizers and committee members: Tracey Bailey, who is a good friend of mine; Rene G. Roy, who is a community leader; and Lyle Morris, who headed up the committee to organize it. It's a great time, for a great cause, and I want to congratulate them.

BRUCE HOUSE

Mr. John Fraser: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize the 25th anniversary of Bruce House, an important organization in the riding of my colleague the member from Ottawa Centre. This is a remarkable organization that provides compassionate care and support to those living with HIV and AIDS in our community. Their work is based on the belief that everyone has the right to live and die with dignity.

Bruce House is led by Jay Koornstra, who took over as executive director in 2001. He's well known in our Ottawa community as a long-time advocate for the LGBTQ community and a passionate supporter for those who have been affected by HIV and AIDS. He leads a caring and compassionate staff who work hard every day to make life a little easier for their patients.

Bruce House's longevity is truly a testament to the kind of care they provide. This Saturday, November 25, they will celebrate this important milestone with a special evening of music and celebration, featuring the Capital Chordettes and the Ottawa Gay Men's Chorus, at the Church of the Ascension in Ottawa.

Bruce House has helped to better the lives of patients living with HIV and AIDS in Ottawa and, in doing so, has created a more inclusive community that benefits us all.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the staff and their volunteers at Bruce House and thank them for all their hard work.

BRUCE POWER

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Today, I am pleased to stand and talk about some good job news in my riding of Huron-Bruce. Bruce Power is a public-private partnership that has their 2,300-acre nuclear generator site on the shores of Lake Huron in my riding.

On November 21, Waterstone Human Capital named Bruce Power as one of Canada's most admired corporate cultures. Bruce Power was awarded the nomination to Canada's 10 Most Admired Corporate Cultures under the Enterprise category. The company was recognized for corporate social responsibility, organizational performance, cultural alignment, and vision and leadership.

As their president and CEO, Duncan Hawthorne, proudly noted, Bruce Power was given this award because, over the company's 12 years, they have created a workplace that not only strives to be a leader in the nuclear field but also focuses on safety, local communities and recognizing employees for great performances.

However, this award applauds more than just an excellent corporate culture. Bruce Power is an example of an outstanding public-private partnership. Public-private partnerships in energy sectors allow for stable, sustainable, long-term growth by bringing private sector expertise and efficiency into the industry.

Bruce Power's public-private partnership model has secured \$7 billion in private investments into public assets and enabled the company to thrive and Ontario to realize a stable, affordable source of energy.

This is great news. Congratulations to Bruce Power and its employees.

CENTRE 55

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise today to talk about Centre 55, which is a social support agency in the riding of Beaches–East York. Every year, they do such wonderful work around a whole broad range of issues, but I just want to talk about two of them.

This past Sunday was the Santa Claus parade that Centre 55 organized along Kingston Road. There were literally thousands upon thousands of kids out there, along with their families, to watch Santa and to get some of the treats that were being passed out.

But Centre 55 is really gearing up for what is called Share a Christmas. They have a mascot called Hamper the Reindeer, and they give out Christmas hampers to families in Beaches–East York that are in need.

Every year, hundreds of volunteers come together to sort the food and all of the goods that are being given away inside of the hampers. They even know if a family has a pet. There's even a little something for each of the pets in the distribution.

Centre 55 is located at 97 Main Street. Their telephone number is 416-691-1113, extension 226. You can call Cameron, Evonne or Nancy. They're looking for volunteers, and they're going to have a delivery on December 22 to the families. Anyone who can give them support before that time is greatly needed.

HAMILTON TIGER-CATS

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I rise in the House today to congratulate the Hamilton Tiger-Cats on a very success-

ful season. Despite the unfortunate loss last night to a great team in Saskatchewan, the Ticans turned around their season, winning the last four games, and they made Ontario very proud by making it to the 101st Grey Cup. After upsetting the Argos last week, the declared underdogs won that game 36-24, claimed the Eastern Division title, and made it to the championship game.

This year, a team with 18 CFL rookies on the roster spent many hours commuting to and from a temporary stadium at the University of Guelph.

The Ticans came a long way, and overcame many odds and many injuries. In the first 40 years of the team's history, they qualified for the playoffs every year, aside from three, and they won seven Grey Cup championships. In 1972, they made the list of being one of only four teams to claim that championship at home. Since 1990, the team has only qualified for the playoffs 10 times and won the Grey Cup once, in 1999.

1310

Making it to this year's Grey Cup was a huge accomplishment, something we should all celebrate. We can't wait for next year's season, when the Ticans will be playing in the newly retrofitted stadium, Tim Hortons Field.

So congratulations, Ticans, on overcoming the odds and representing Ontario. They made us very proud.

EMILY MacDONALD

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm pleased to rise today to honour a grand lady in my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry who was born on Gore Road south of Williamstown in 1904. Emily MacDonald, who lived in her own house on William Street in Williamstown until she was almost 105, celebrated her 109th birthday on November 5 at Maxville Manor, surrounded by friends and family.

Emily MacDonald was one of nine children and the second-eldest of two daughters born to noted Glengarry athlete John Kenneth Alexander MacDonald and Flora MacDonald, who were married in St. Raphael's. Emily never married and stayed in Williamstown to care for her ailing mother, afterwards joining her brother in Connecticut and working there in the health care sector until 1970, when she returned to Williamstown.

Emily, who is as sharp as a tack, talks of many events and changes that have occurred over her long and rewarding life. She recalls the day her father went off to defend our country in the First World War and remembers how her mother cried over his departure.

After returning to Glengarry, Emily soon became involved in her parish, the Ladies' Guild and other organizations, but always preferred to stay out of the limelight. I always remember Emily standing at the table at the parish supper, handing out food well into her 90s. She's a great fan of Celtic and Scottish music, and loved to dance and garden, and still enjoys socializing, laughter and fun.

I certainly am honoured to have had Emily as a neighbour of mine, and I look forward to celebrating many more birthdays. Happy birthday, Emily.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Phil McNeely: I want to bring renewed attention and to call for greater action to be taken to protect our environment. Just last week, we heard that Canada ranked last on a list of the world's 27 wealthiest countries for its environmental record. Another report ranked Canada's federal efforts to tackle greenhouse gases 55th out of 58 countries, just barely ahead of Iran, Kazakhstan and Saudi Arabia.

This past year, carbon dioxide levels in our atmosphere passed 400 parts per million. The CO₂ level continues to rise faster and faster. We cannot sit back and continue to emit greenhouse gases the way we do. It's time all countries lowered their emissions. We must think of our children's and our grandchildren's future and that of our wonderful environment.

One of the most significant ways Ontario has reduced carbon emissions was our government's decision to get out of coal. No other national or subnational government has taken as big a step as Ontario in reducing our collective carbon footprint. When Mr. Gore was here last week, he said that future generations will ask, "How did you find the moral courage to act against climate change?" And part of the answer will be: "Ontario and Ontarians led the way."

Last month, this government passed my private member's motion to implement home energy efficiency disclosures. In a few years, Ontario could have most of our homes energy-efficient. Home energy efficiency disclosures in Ontario will help to further reduce our carbon footprint by creating employment and saving Ontarians dollars.

It's time the federal government follows Ontario's lead on getting the rest of Canada out of coal and reducing our carbon footprint.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. John O'Toole: On November 7, I had the opportunity to attend the fifth annual Clarington Energy Summit, hosted by Ontario Power Generation and the Clarington Board of Trade. Those community leaders in attendance learned more about the ongoing planning for the energy projects in Durham. Most importantly, we gained in-depth knowledge of the Darlington nuclear refurbishment project, and it's my hope that this project goes ahead on time and on schedule.

However, the recent cancellation by Premier Wynne of the new build, which would have created thousands more jobs, was a very serious disappointment in the community. As well as providing safe, reliable and carbon-friendly energy, nuclear energy is very comparable on the positive side when compared to unreliable renewables.

Key energy companies were represented, featuring Dietmar Reiner, senior vice-president of nuclear refurbishment at OPG; Howard Titus, the facilities manager at Covanta Durham-York's energy-from-waste project; Daniel Hoornweg, professor at UOIT and chief safety

and risk officer for the province of Ontario at TSSA; as well as Amir Shalaby, who is the vice-president of power systems planning at the Ontario Power Association, whom I questioned on the new long-term energy plan: Why this cancellation at this time? Stephen Somerville, VP of Competitive Power Ventures, was another very admirable presenter.

Mr. Speaker, it's very true that energy is the strength of Ontario; it's also the strength of the economy. The plan they are on right now with this government is simply wrong. We've seen it with job losses throughout Ontario. They have—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I thank all members for their comments.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Standing order 63(a) provides that “the Standing Committee on Estimates shall present one report with respect to all of the estimates and supplementary estimates considered pursuant to standing orders 60 and 62 no later than the third Thursday in November of each calendar year.”

The House not having received a report from the Standing Committee on Estimates for certain ministries and offices on Thursday, November 21, 2013, as required by the standing orders of this House, pursuant to standing order 63(b), the estimates before the committee of the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs; Ministry of Energy; Ministry of Education; Ministry of Infrastructure; Ministry of Children and Youth Services; Office of Francophone Affairs; and Ministry of Consumer Services are deemed to be passed by the committee and are deemed to be reported to and received by the House.

Report deemed received.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CAPPING TOP PUBLIC SECTOR SALARIES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE PLAFONNEMENT DES HAUTS TRAITEMENTS DU SECTEUR PUBLIC

Ms. Horwath moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 136, An Act to cap the top public sector salaries /
Projet de loi 136, Loi plafonnant les hauts traitements du
secteur public.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, once again I'm introducing a bill that enacts the Capping Top Public Sector Salaries Act, 2013. Under this act, a public sector employee's salary shall not exceed the amount that is twice the Premier's annual salary. Exceptions, of course, are provided for salaries that were established before the bill comes into force, because we don't tear up contracts; for salaries that are established under collective agreements, because we don't tear up those kinds of contracts either; and for salaries of employees that are prescribed by regulation for work of a scientific or technical nature.

This is several times now that I've introduced this concept, and I hope I can get Liberals and Conservatives to actually support it this time.

PAVED SHOULDER CONSTRUCTION AND BICYCLING ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA CONSTRUCTION D'ACCOTEMENTS STABILISÉS ET LA CIRCULATION DES BICYCLETTES

Mr. Norm Miller moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 137, An Act to amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act and the Highway Traffic Act to construct paved shoulders and permit bicycles to ride on them / Projet de loi 137, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement des voies publiques et des transports en commun et le Code de la route pour construire des accotements stabilisés et permettre aux bicyclettes d'y circuler.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Norm Miller: The bill amends the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act to require the Minister of Transportation to construct paved shoulders on prescribed portions of the King's highway. The minister is required to construct paved shoulders on prescribed portions of the King's highway when there is a significant undertaking to repave or resurface that portion. However, the minister is not required to construct a paved shoulder where doing so would be impractical. These paved shoulders must be at least one metre wide and must be marked with a sign warning drivers to watch out and share the road with pedestrians and cyclists.

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The bill also amends the Highway Traffic Act to allow bicycles to be ridden on paved shoulders.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. In introduction of bills, I missed the last rotation. Minister of the Environment.

ENDING COAL FOR CLEANER AIR ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR L'ABANDON DU CHARBON POUR UN AIR PLUS PROPRE

Mr. Bradley moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 138, An Act to amend the Environmental Protection Act to require the cessation of coal use to generate electricity at generation facilities / Projet de loi 138, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement pour exiger la cessation de l'utilisation du charbon pour produire de l'électricité dans les installations de production.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'll make my statement during the time allocated for ministerial statements.

TARION ACCOUNTABILITY AND OVERSIGHT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA RESPONSABILISATION ET LA SURVEILLANCE DE TARION

Mr. Marchese moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 139, An Act to amend various Acts in respect of the corporation designated under the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act / Projet de loi 139, Loi modifiant diverses lois à l'égard de la société désignée en application de la Loi sur le Régime de garanties des logements neufs de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act is amended to provide that the minister responsible for that act shall appoint the majority of Tarion's board members. The minister and Tarion are required to enter into an accountability agreement.

Tarion's objects are extended to include serving as a consumer protection agency. Tarion is required to publish a directory of home builders on the Internet, and the directory must contain specified information about each builder's performance.

The definition of "home" in the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act is amended to include units in conversion condominiums, and warranties in respect of specified matters related to condominiums are extended from one year to five years.

The Auditor General is given the authority to audit Tarion's operations, and the Ombudsman Act is amended

to permit the Ombudsman to conduct investigations in respect of Tarion.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

COAL-FIRED GENERATING STATIONS

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm standing today to strengthen this government's commitment to fighting climate change and to protecting the environment and the health of the people of the province of Ontario. I have the honour of introducing legislation that, if passed, would ensure that the health and environmental benefits of prohibiting coal use in Ontario are protected by legislation.

Ontario's phase-out of coal-fired electricity is the single largest greenhouse gas reduction initiative in all of North America. Ending coal use is a decisive step that has led former US vice-president Al Gore to call Ontario a world leader in fighting climate change. Ending coal in Ontario means we will all have cleaner air to breathe, while saving the people of Ontario \$4.4 billion a year in health, financial and environmental costs.

As stewards of the environment and guardians of our province's future, we believe that prohibiting coal use in Ontario is the right course to take. Ontario's elimination of coal-fired electricity generation is equivalent to taking up to seven million cars off the road.

I'm proposing this legislation, the Ending Coal for Cleaner Air Act, to ensure that once the power generating facilities at Atikokan, Lambton, Nanticoke and Thunder Bay stop burning coal, coal-fired generation in Ontario will remain a practice of the past.

This legislation would, if passed by the assembly, prohibit the use of coal at stand-alone generating facilities in Ontario after December 31, 2014, thereby preventing new stand-alone coal-fired generating facilities in Ontario. We have industrial facilities in Ontario that use coal for production purposes but not for the primary purpose of generating electricity. Facilities of this type would not be subject to the prohibition.

Other jurisdictions have also recognized the high environmental and health costs of coal-fired generation and are beginning to phase out coal use. At the recent COP 19 meetings in Warsaw, the United Kingdom and the United States announced their intention to stop funding coal projects in developing countries. The dirty coal era is coming to an end not only in Ontario; it is beginning to happen on a global scale.

Here in Ontario, we have taken the lead on ending coal-fired generation. Our actions and the actions of other governments are being taken because people's health and the stability of our planet's climate are in jeopardy.

Combating climate change is not an easy task. It has been called the defining issue of our time, and it threatens not only Ontario's economy and growth but that of all nations. It is truly a global issue. Many of the recent

weather events around the world are being attributed by scientists to a rise in ocean temperature, a direct result of too many greenhouse gases in our planet's atmosphere.

It is this government's commitment to fight climate change and to protect public health that has inspired us to introduce this bill. I encourage all members of this House to stand with us in supporting this proposed legislation.

DIABETES

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, November is Diabetes Awareness Month in Canada. This gives us the opportunity to raise awareness about diabetes and diabetes prevention in Ontario. It's also an opportunity to thank the many health care providers who work tirelessly to provide high-quality care to people living with diabetes and pre-diabetes, and who help us deliver the Ontario diabetes strategy.

Later today, I'll be attending the Queen's Park reception hosted by the Canadian Diabetes Association, and I hope all MPPs are able to join us.

The Canadian Diabetes Association is a remarkable advocate for people with diabetes. They provide education to health care professionals, they support research, and they help translate that research into practical applications. I know that we have many representatives from the Canadian Diabetes Association in the chamber with us. Thank you to volunteers and staff at the Canadian Diabetes Association for all that you do.

Diabetes is a chronic disease that can cause serious complications like blindness, kidney disease, heart disease and amputation, if not managed properly. The Canadian Diabetes Association estimates there are nearly 1.4 million people in Ontario who have been diagnosed with diabetes. That's nearly 10% of the population. It represents some \$5.6 billion in estimated direct and indirect costs to the health care system, and that number is growing rapidly. By 2020, it's estimated that the number of people living with diabetes will reach almost two million, with an estimated cost of \$7 billion to the health care system.

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To date, there are no known ways to prevent type 1 diabetes; however, research is clear that for many people the risk of type 2 diabetes can be delayed or prevented through healthy eating, weight management and exercise.

Fortunately, both type 1 and type 2 diabetes can be managed to result in better health outcomes. One way we're helping to manage the disease is by funding insulin pumps. I'm proud to say that in 2006, Ontario became the first province to fully fund insulin pumps for children and youth with type 1 diabetes. The program was expanded to include adults with type 1 diabetes in September 2008. So far, the program has provided more than 15,000 Ontarians with funding for the purchase of insulin pumps and related supplies.

We also provide an annual grant to seniors who take insulin by injection, and under the Monitoring for Health Program administered by the Canadian Diabetes Associa-

tion, Ontario residents receive funding for the equipment and supplies used to test blood glucose levels.

To improve health outcomes for people living with diabetes in Ontario, our government announced the Ontario Diabetes Strategy in 2008. Through this strategy, we've made investments aimed at reducing the risk and prevalence of diabetes, we've provided greater support to people to help manage their diabetes, and we've improved access to and the quality of diabetes services and care in Ontario.

I'm proud to say that the strategy has an impressive list of accomplishments. As of June 2010, 100% of Ontarians with diabetes who wished to have a primary care provider—a doctor or a nurse practitioner—now have one. We've established diabetes regional coordination centres in each of the 14 LHINs to coordinate diabetes services and foster the adoption of clinical best practices in diabetes management. We've provided diabetes self-management skills training to over 8,000 individuals and over 7,250 health care providers.

We've established six centres for complex diabetes care. They provide a one-stop shop for specialized patient-centred care and treatment for people with diabetes who have multiple medical conditions and complex health needs. Speaker, I've had the pleasure of visiting three of our centres for complex diabetes care, and I can tell you they are making a tremendous difference in the lives of those they serve.

And we've put in place community-based diabetes prevention initiatives that have reached more than 62,000 individuals who are at high risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

While we've come a long way, there's still more we can and must do to help those affected by diabetes to lead healthier lives. Diabetes prevention and management are two of the most important components of diabetes care, and our government is committed to working on both those fronts to improve the health of Ontarians.

Our improvements to diabetes care align with all three pillars of our action plan for health care: We're helping people with diabetes to live healthier lives to prevent or better manage diabetes; we're making sure that those with diabetes have a primary care provider; and by funding specialized regional programs, we're making sure that people get the right care at the right time and in the right place closer to home.

During Diabetes Awareness Month, let's all be reminded of the importance of a healthy lifestyle, physical activity and the need to better manage our health if we live with diabetes so we can prevent or delay its serious consequences.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Statements by ministries? Last call for statements by ministries.

It is now time for responses.

COAL-FIRED GENERATING STATIONS

Mr. Michael Harris: I'm pleased to rise today in response to the Ending Coal for Cleaner Air Act. As most Ontarians know, phasing out coal-powered electricity has

been a commitment made by all three parties in this Legislature, starting with the regulation issued by our party, the PC Party, more than a decade ago to close down the Lakeview generating station.

Under the Liberals, however, progress on this file has moved quite slowly. Just consider the timing of what we're discussing here today. The Liberals first promised they would shut down all the province's coal plants by 2007—yes, 2007. But here we are: It's 2013, and the job still won't be done until the end of next year.

Our party has said from the start that all this file needs is leadership. But here we are addressing a bill that would seem to be nothing more than further Liberal green-washing.

Let me tell you why that's the case. At the government press conference with Al Gore last Thursday, the Premier said that legislation banning coal was necessary, yet she also admitted that this bill was a "symbolic move." Here's the problem: The people of Ontario do not expect their Premier to symbolize leadership; they expect their Premier to take a leadership role. That's why I found it quite peculiar that the Premier said nothing about how the province could work with industry to reduce private sector coal use. The government could easily move forward on this issue by allowing cement companies to use alternative fuels in their kilns, but we didn't hear anything about that. We just watched the Premier pat herself on the back for a bill that she said will symbolize the government's commitment to fight climate change.

Given the Premier's rhetoric last week, it would seem that the Liberals are once again testing the waters on their job-killing cap-and-trade scheme. This time they're trying to whip up support by tabling what the Premier has called symbolic legislation.

I am looking forward to reading the minister's bill to see if he actually included anything in it other than symbolism.

DIABETES

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm really pleased to rise today to speak about Diabetes Awareness Month on behalf of the PC caucus. November, of course, marks Diabetes Awareness Month, and November 14 is World Diabetes Day.

In Canada there are roughly 2.6 million people living with diabetes, and it's estimated that one in every 10 people around the world will have diabetes by 2035.

Diabetes can be controlled with proper education and management, but without the proper tools, serious and costly complications of diabetes are responsible for over 80% of diabetes health care costs.

We must ensure that people living with diabetes have the tools they need, like diabetic test strips, to be able to effectively manage their health. Cuts to these tools, such as this government has done by limiting test strips, hurt patients as well as creating more long-term costs to the system.

Ultimately, if diabetes goes undiagnosed, which often happens, or is poorly managed, blood glucose levels will

remain elevated, which gradually damages organs and can cause other complications, like blindness. However, with proper management, diabetes does not have to be life-changing. Proper education, physical activity, nutrition, weight management, medication, lifestyle management and watching your blood pressure all help to reduce the risks of complications from diabetes. Organizations like the Canadian Diabetes Association help patients learn to live with and manage their disease so they can live normal lives. The association provides important information and support services that help people to navigate diabetes.

The Canadian Diabetes Association has also created an online awareness campaign called *Who Are You Fighting For?*, which encourages individuals to share their diabetes story or stories of individuals that inspire them in the fight against diabetes. People can visit fightingdiabetes.ca to learn more.

In conclusion, I would like to thank those who are in the gallery today representing the Canadian Diabetes Association and thank all of your members for the important work that you do in our communities each and every day.

COAL-FIRED GENERATING STATIONS

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'd like to take the opportunity this afternoon to respond to the minister's statement on ending coal for cleaner air. Today the minister has introduced a bill to ban the use of coal as a source of electricity. I would say that the people in this province expect us to be leaders when it comes to protecting our health and our environment, so it's good news that this government says they will finally stop burning dirty coal for energy, 10 years after they first promised to shut down coal-fired power plants in Ontario.

The people of this province have paid a significant cost for the government's failure to act sooner. According to the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, up to 250 deaths each year are directly related to burning coal. Our leading scientists, of course, continue to warn us that Ontario continues to fail to meet our commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

As we know, this government has mismanaged the energy file, and it's not just a cost to our health and to our environment. We've also paid a considerable financial cost for this government's poor energy choices. The decision to move the gas plants in Mississauga and Oakville—plants that were supposed to help facilitate the transition from coal to more renewable, sustainable energy sources—was a disaster, and these private power plant scandals cost the people of this province over a billion dollars. This is money that should have been invested in renewable energy, in energy conservation, in public transit and in our health care system, but instead the government used a billion dollars of public money to save five Liberal seats.

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Countless scandals and broken promises by this government have shaken the confidence of people across Ontario. So we will need to examine this rather thick bill

very carefully to make sure that this legislation is effective and will meet the needs of the people of Ontario. Today's bill aims to legislate existing policy, is my understanding. Given this government's penchant to govern in secrecy behind closed doors, New Democrats welcome the opportunity to read this bill and to debate it publicly in our Legislature and to take steps to push for strong legislation in Ontario that protects our environment.

DIABETES

M^{me} France Gélinas: It's my pleasure to add my two cents on Diabetes Awareness Month, le Mois de la sensibilisation au diabète. That's the month of November. November 14 was actually the international day for diabetes awareness, and the month of November is coming to an end.

First of all, I want to thank all of the volunteers from the Canadian Diabetes Association who are at Queen's Park today. They are doing phenomenal work at educating people like me and all the MPPs in this House as well as the people we work with as to what it means to have diabetes and how we can improve the lives of people living with diabetes.

The statistics are horrendous: 1.4 million of us, 10% of the people of Ontario, have diabetes. If you come to some of the First Nations communities where I come from, multiply this by three and five times; rather than 10%, you're talking about 30%. In some First Nations communities, 50% of the members are living with diagnosed diabetes.

We can do better. How do we do this? First of all, we'll listen to the good advice of the Canadian Diabetes Association, which just did a ton of work to release their new clinical practice guidelines. Those guidelines are worth looking at. Go on their website. Whether you are someone living with diabetes or someone helping someone living with diabetes, go to guidelinesdiabetes.ca. It is a wealth of information. It is easy to use. It will make a difference.

The government has invested quite a bit in diabetes through the diabetes network and the diabetes strategy, but most of it has been focused on treating the disease once it already develops. There is so much more we could do if we were to focus on prevention, on helping people to stay healthy, helping people in health promotion and disease prevention, because, as has been said before, if we can get people to eat healthy food, have a healthy weight and do a little bit of exercise, 90% of this 1.4 million who have type 2 diabetes would have a chance to be disease-free, because all of the horrific things we hear about diabetes, like amputations and blindness, are when the diabetes is poorly managed. We can do better. We can have interdisciplinary care. We can follow the practice guidelines from the diabetes association, and we will all do better.

Today being November 25, I have to wish my husband a happy birthday.

PETITIONS

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Hydro One Networks Inc. (Hydro One) is proposing construction of a new transformer station on a 100-acre site in Clarington, near the Oshawa-Clarington boundary;

"Whereas the site is on the Oak Ridges moraine/greenbelt;

"Whereas concerns have been raised" by citizens "about the environmental impacts of this development, including harm to wildlife as well as contamination of ponds, streams and the underground water supply;

"Whereas sites zoned for industrial and/or commercial use are the best locations for large electricity transformer stations," perhaps at the one in Whitby;

"Whereas most, if not all, residents do not agree this project is needed and that, if proven to be necessary, it could be best accommodated at alternative locations such as Cherrywood or Wesleyville," or Wilson Road;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned ask that the Ontario Legislature support the preservation of the Oak Ridges moraine, the greenbelt and the natural environment at this site. We also ask that the Ontario Legislature require the Clarington transformer station to be built at an alternative location zoned for an industrial facility and selected in accordance with the best planning principles" and after a full EA process.

I'm pleased to sign and support this and to present it to Maya Joy, one of the pages.

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas Ontario's minimum wage has been frozen at \$10.25 an hour since 2010, and some workers earn even less due to current exemptions in the Employment Standards Act; and

"Whereas full-time minimum wage workers are living at nearly 20% below the poverty line as measured by the Ontario government's low-income measure (LIM); and

"Whereas minimum wage should, as a matter of principle, bring people working 35 hours per week above the poverty line; and

"Whereas an immediate increase in the minimum wage to \$14 per hour would bring workers' wages 10% above the LIM poverty line; and

"Whereas raising the minimum wage will benefit workers, local businesses and the economy by putting money in workers' pockets to spend in their local community;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately increase the minimum wage to \$14 per hour for all workers and there-

after increase it annually by no less than the cost of living.”

I'm in agreement, affix my signature thereto, and send it down with page Marina.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Phil McNeely: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the current enrolment of Avalon Public School in Orléans is 732 students, with 11 portables onsite;

“Whereas under current projections, by 2014, enrolment in the Avalon Public School is forecast to be in the 900 range increasing to approximately 1,359 students by 2022;

“Whereas the issue of overcrowding and lack of space threatens the OCDSB's ability to offer full-day kindergarten in Avalon under the Ministry of Education's targets;

“Whereas the enrolment at Avalon Public School is expected to continue rising at a rate of 10% to 15% a year for the foreseeable future;

“Whereas the staff of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, following an objective, evidence-based process, recommended Avalon PS II as its top priority for a new school, calling the need ‘urgent’;

“Whereas the board disregarded independent staff counsel and ranked the school from number 1 to number 7;

“We, the undersigned, call on the government of Ontario and the Ministry of Education to provide the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board with the necessary funding to build Avalon Public School II in the next round of capital projects.”

I support this petition and send it forward with Najat.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

“Whereas Kimm Fletcher, a mother of two diagnosed with brain cancer, has been prescribed with the drug Avastin to help prolong her life;

“Whereas the Ontario health ministry's Committee to Evaluate Drugs (CED) has indicated that the use of this drug is associated with higher, progression-free survival rates;

“Whereas this drug is not covered under OHIP—but is in other provincial jurisdictions;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

“That the Ontario Parliament call on the Premier and her health minister to extend OHIP funding of the drug Avastin, so that Kimm Fletcher, and others like her, can have as much time to enjoy with her family as possible; and to tell the Wynne administration that ‘Our health care system includes Kimm Fletcher.’”

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have 647 names signed onto this petition that comes from all over the Niagara-Hamilton area.

“Whereas Ontario ranks ninth of 10 provinces in terms of the total per capita funding allocated to long-term care; and

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care data shows that there are more than 30,000 Ontarians waiting for long-term-care placements and wait-times have tripled since 2005; and

“Whereas there is a perpetual shortage of staff in long-term-care facilities and residents often wait an unreasonable length of time to receive care, e.g., to be attended to for toileting needs; to be fed; to receive a bath; for pain medication. Since 2008, funding for 2.8 paid hours of care per resident per day has been provided. In that budget year, a promise was made to increase this funding to 4.0 hours per resident per day by 2012. This has not been done; and

“Whereas the training of personal support workers is unregulated and insufficient to provide them with the skills and knowledge to assist residents who are being admitted with higher physical, psychological and emotional needs. Currently, training across the province is varied, inconsistent and under-regulated;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“(1) immediately increase the number of paid hours of nursing and personal care per resident per day to 4.0 hours (as promised in 2008);

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“(2) develop a plan to phase in future increases so that the number of paid hours per resident per day of nursing and personal care is 5.0 hours by January 2015;

“(3) establish a licensing body, such as a college, that will develop a process of registration, accreditation and certification for all personal support workers.”

I'm happy to ask page Sarah to bring that to the Clerk.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean Program was implemented only as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

“Whereas vehicle emissions have declined so significantly from 1998 to 2010 that they are no longer among the major domestic contributors of smog in Ontario; and

“Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions is the result of factors other than Drive Clean, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

“Whereas the current government has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable, and prone to error; and

"Whereas the Auditor General identified that Drive Clean has had little to no impact on the reduction of emissions in Ontario and that the program's pass rate has exceeded 90% every year since 2004; and

"Whereas the Auditor General's No. 1 recommendation is for the government to 'formally evaluate the extent to which the Drive Clean program continues to be an effective initiative';

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program."

I affix my name in support.

AIR QUALITY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas diesel trains are a health hazard for people who live near them;

"Whereas more toxic fumes will be created by the 400 daily trains than the car trips they are meant to replace;

"Whereas the planned air-rail link does not serve the communities through which it passes and will be priced beyond the reach of most commuters;

"Whereas all major cities in the world with train service between their downtown core and the airport use electric trains;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario stop building the air-rail link for diesel and move to electrify the route immediately;

"That the air-rail link be designed, operated and priced as an affordable transportation option between all points along its route."

I certainly agree with this. I'll sign it, along with the thousands of others, and give it to page Sarah to be delivered to the table.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Jim Wilson: "Whereas Kimm Fletcher, a mother of two diagnosed with brain cancer, has been prescribed with the drug Avastin to help prolong her life;

"Whereas the Ontario health ministry's Committee to Evaluate Drugs (CED) has indicated that the use of this drug is associated with higher, progression-free survival rates;

"Whereas this drug is not covered under OHIP—but is in other provincial jurisdictions;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario Parliament call on the Premier and her health minister to extend OHIP funding of the drug Avastin, so that Kimm Fletcher, and others like her, can have as much time to enjoy with her family as possible; and to tell the Wynne administration that 'Our health care system includes Kimm Fletcher.'"

I certainly agree with this petition. I will sign it.

MINIMUM WAGE

Ms. Cindy Forster: "Petition to raise the minimum wage:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's minimum wage has been frozen at \$10.25 an hour since 2010, and some workers earn even less due to current exemptions in the Employment Standards Act; and

"Whereas full-time minimum wage workers are living at nearly 20% below the poverty line as measured by the Ontario government's low-income measure (LIM); and

"Whereas minimum wage should, as a matter of principle, bring people working 35 hours per week above the poverty line; and

"Whereas an immediate increase in the minimum wage to \$14 per hour would bring workers' wages 10% above the LIM poverty line; and

"Whereas raising the minimum wage will benefit workers, local businesses and the economy by putting money in workers' pockets to spend in their local community;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately increase the minimum wage to \$14 per hour for all workers and thereafter increase it annually by no less than the cost of living."

I support this petition and will sign it and give it to page Arvind to bring to the table.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Toby Barrett: I have a number of signatures on a petition titled "Stop the Gravy Train—Call an Election.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government has wasted \$1.1 billion of taxpayers'—"

Interjections.

Mr. Toby Barrett: You don't want to hear what people write on these petitions, by the way. I'd be glad to read it out.

"Whereas the current—"

Interjection: I think you should report that.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Well, it says here—this is from a constituent: "Let's get rid of the corrupt McGuinty/Wynne impostors." He should've put a—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I ask the member to withdraw the unparliamentary remark.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I withdraw on behalf of my constituent.

"Whereas the current Liberal government has wasted \$1.1 billion of taxpayers' dollars on cancelled gas plants; and

"Whereas the people in Ontario have lost confidence in the McGuinty/Wynne government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Request the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario to call an election immediately."

I agree with the sentiments in this petition.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from northeastern Ontario:

"Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: on average, 97% of collective agreements are negotiated without work disruption; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

"Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page William to bring it to the table.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I have a petition, and it's labelled: "Stop the Gravy Train—Call an Election.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government has wasted \$1.1 billion of taxpayers' dollars on cancelled gas plants; and

"Whereas the people in Ontario have lost confidence in the McGuinty/Wynne government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Request the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario to call an election immediately."

I agree with this and will be signing—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Parkdale—High Park.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas aggressive dogs are found among all breeds and mixed breeds; and

"Whereas breed-specific legislation has been shown to be" a cruel, "expensive and ineffective approach to dog bite prevention; and

"Whereas problem dog owners are best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible behaviour;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To repeal the breed-specific sections of the Dog Owners' Liability Act (2005) and any related acts, and to instead implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and types."

On behalf of the over 1,000 dogs that have been euthanized because of the way they look, I'm going to sign this and give it to Arvind to be delivered to the table.

MARKDALE HOSPITAL

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Grey Bruce Health Services' Markdale hospital is the only health care facility between Owen Sound and Orangeville on the Highway 10 corridor;

"Whereas the community of Markdale rallied to raise \$13 million on the promise they would get a new state-of-the-art hospital in Markdale;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care announce as soon as possible its intended construction date for the new Markdale hospital and ensure that the care needs of the patients and families of our community are met in a timely manner."

I support it, will sign it and pass it to page Julia.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over the northeast:

"Whereas the Ontario government has made ... (PET) scanning a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients" under certain conditions; and

"Whereas since October 2009, insured PET scans are performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program, and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through" Health Sciences North, "thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask William to bring it to the Clerk.

OPPOSITION DAY

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Tim Hudak: I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls upon the government to recognize that Niagara Health System supervisor, Dr. Kevin Smith, recommended that consolidating existing hospitals in Niagara into a new Niagara south hospital will provide better services for patients and families by simplifying

physician and staff coverage to enhance response times and reduce wait times; attracting and retaining specialists because of increased workload; and investing in state-of-the-art equipment by eliminating the costs of duplicate machines at multiple facilities;

1400

To recognize that the Wynne Liberal government received Dr. Smith's final report to build a south Niagara hospital in September 2012 and for 14 months have dragged their feet on implementing his recommendations that would save taxpayers \$285 million in capital costs and \$10 million annually in operating costs—money that can be used to attract and hire more nurses and specialists;

To recognize that Dr. Smith stated on November 15th, 2013, that “it doesn't make financial or medical sense to build a new south Niagara hospital and keep the existing sites open”;

Therefore, it is the opinion of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that a new Niagara South hospital should be built at the Lyons Creek location in Niagara Falls, along with two additional urgent care facilities, to replace the Douglas Memorial Hospital, Greater Niagara General Hospital, Port Colborne Hospital and the Welland Hospital.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Hudak has moved opposition day motion number 4. I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tim Hudak: As someone who knows the Niagara region quite well—it's where I was born and raised, in the border town of Fort Erie; where I make my home, in Wellandport, today; where my family lives; where I went to high school in Welland at Notre Dame—I want to say that I'm very excited about the opportunity here. I'm very excited about the potential and the vision of building a new, state-of-the-art hospital in south Niagara that will tend to the needs of the people as well as act as a beacon to attract the best specialists to make their home in south Niagara. That's where I come from. My parents live in the town of Fort Erie and, God bless them, they're still regularly at the Y, playing tennis and playing golf. They're in good shape, but they're going to need that additional health care down the road. That's just the way nature is.

I think of the neighbours I grew up with; I think of my own family; I think of friends, and I think of people I talk to every day in that part of the province. They want to see that new state-of-the-art south Niagara hospital built. They want to see shovels in the ground today.

I'm confident of that. I hear that all the time. I want to be optimistic. I want to think positively about this, because leadership is about dreaming big and talking about a better tomorrow and the path to get there. We've laid out that plan for a strong economy, with more people back to work, to eliminate the waste, duplication and scandalous, selfish decisions. The Liberal government has spent \$1 billion on gas plants that could have gone into building the south Niagara hospital, for example.

I want to think positively and optimistically about what can be: the kind of state-of-the-art facility to give

the residents in Niagara and those who work at those sites, the modern, sophisticated, future hospital that they deserve today. But, as I stated in my motion, it has been 14 long months that the Premier has left the health care of south Niagara residents in limbo.

In fact, it has been 18 months since Dr. Smith's preliminary report saying to consolidate the four sites into one new state-of-the-art site in south Niagara. The government, for whatever reason, has continued to ignore the recommendations of their own health expert, Dr. Kevin Smith, who's a very respected health care authority and has engaged the community, I think, in unprecedented consultation to come up with this idea and look forward to it.

I want to be absolutely clear about this: My party has supported Dr. Smith's conclusions from the outset, from square one, from the get-go. That's the right thing to do. That's where I come from and that's what I believe in: that the building of a modern and new hospital in Niagara Falls, along with two urgent care facilities, would save taxpayers \$285 million in capital costs. From rehabilitating and repairing the existing four sites to building a new hospital, that's \$285 million in savings.

Secondly, it saves you \$10 million in operating costs. Instead of operating four sites with the administration and overhead, it saves you \$10 million annually. That means you'd actually have more money to pay more nurses, who are currently run off their feet in the existing sites, to attract new specialists and to do more procedures and surgeries.

It makes sense from a health care perspective. It saves the taxpayers money. So what's not to like about it? Let's get going and make this a reality for the residents of south Niagara.

But the government continues to avoid doing what is right. They're ignoring the recommendations of their own appointed expert in the field. We've seen this happen, sadly, over and over again, where it's almost like the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals think Ontario ends at the Burlington bridge. They think you run into customs and you enter, I guess, New York state. They seem to have written off Niagara. I don't see why else they would stall this project for almost 18 months since its initial recommendation and leave it on the shelf, but we're not going to let them get away with it. We're going to keep the pressure on. We're going to fight for what's right.

This is close to where I grew up, and I think I understand the region's need. I've used all these four hospitals in the past—hard-working people. We have a lot of people working there, and they're highly skilled. As I said, they're run off their feet. They're very dedicated to their jobs, but they have older and aging sites that are limiting what can be a better tomorrow with a new state-of-the-art hospital.

So job number one—I've called on the minister in the House; she has dodged it today—to help her be successful today, is to actually fund the planning grant to get this project going, to give it the green light, and I hope we'll hear a positive answer—

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a no-brainer. That's a no-brainer. Let's go.

Mr. Tim Hudak: As my colleague from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke says, that's a no-brainer. So let's get on with it, and hopefully we'll hear that news from the Minister of Health later today.

I know with the heckling across the way, they're trying to say that this is something to use in the by-election, and if it is successful in the by-election, you'll hopefully have a candidate some time relatively soon. Maybe that way, we can finally force her arm so you'll go ahead with that, because I know the member from St. Catharines is supportive of a south Niagara hospital. I think he would be lobbying for that behind the scenes.

But I want to pre-empt that angle by the Liberals to say that we've been there from square one. The report came out. We got behind it. We said it's the right thing; we're going to fight for it. We pushed for it here in the House in question period.

I want to give credit, too, where credit is due, to my colleague Bart Maves from Niagara Falls. Bart Maves is a regional councillor. He will be our PC candidate in the by-election. I know that the Liberals are against this, but Bart Maves, back in 2007—six years ago—had this vision. He said it was the right thing to do. He's been fighting for six years and I hope he joins us here to actually make it a reality.

Hopefully, I'm convincing my colleagues in both the New Democrat and Liberal causes why they should support the motion today. I'll give you three good reasons:

(1) Good health care means you have to have great health care professionals. The challenge is, if you're running around four or five different sites for a specialist, that makes the job a lot harder. That means a lot more early mornings and a lot more late nights. Quite frankly, one of the challenges we've had in attracting new specialists to south Niagara is if you're on call one out of every two days or one out of every three days, that's a lot of pressure. I sat down with doctors last week who told me they're at recruitment sessions to recruit new doctors, new specialists to Niagara, and the new doctors want to know, "Well, is that new hospital going to be built or not?" Because that will help make that decision. New graduates in obstetrics, in surgeries, for example, want to know that they will actually have the kinds of conditions where they can focus on the work, maybe one in nine as opposed to one in two, one in three. I think the minister knows this—and Dr. Smith pointed it out—that our only chance, our best and only chance of getting obstetrics back into south Niagara is to build this new site and consolidate the birth services there. It's a growing part of Niagara. So why don't we actually return obstetrics in a brand new south Niagara hospital? It's our only chance of doing that.

(2) Critical mass means better outcomes. Whether it's through cath labs, strokes, obstetrics, as I mentioned, for south Niagara, if you do something more often, you get good at it. You become highly efficient. You can actually then produce more outcomes at a better patient care level.

That's pretty basic sense when it comes to health care, but it's a lot harder to do if you're doing it in four different sites as opposed to doing so in just one.

A master carpenter doesn't simply make one cabinet a year. They specialize in that area. They get the best health outcomes. You're not going to attract specialists and you won't have that critical mass unless you move to one state-of-the-art hospital in south Niagara as opposed to running around between four.

The third and final point is, if you have too many sites, it is hard to operate. This simply means that you're going to have higher overhead and higher administration costs. You're putting more and more money into care and maintenance of aging facilities than you put into patient care. Really, you face two choices: Do you keep the four existing sites open and put all that money, almost \$1 billion, I think, into maintaining the old sites? Or you can put it towards a new hospital and improving patient care. Sometimes leaders have to make decisions. Sometimes you come to a crossroads. Sometimes you come to a point of inflection where you have to make a choice: Do you keep the existing sites and put money into maintenance and overhead, or do you actually surge ahead and make the right call?

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I know what path we're on, Speaker. To make the call for a brand new state-of-the-art hospital seems pretty basic. The problem I have is that when the NDP come to a cross in the roads and Andrea Horwath chooses between A and B, she says, "I choose both." That's not leadership; that's not realistic. A vote for the NDP—really, you can kiss that new hospital goodbye. That's what it comes down to, because nobody believes that's any kind of plan.

So what's going to happen in the time ahead? I know my colleagues want to speak on this issue. I have outlined why I think this makes medical sense, why it makes financial sense and why I recognize there's a real need where I come from, and in many senses why it's personal, considering where I'm from and the people I know and talk to each and every day.

We get the Liberal game here, right? There are many advantages to having been elected and representing the great people of Niagara and parts of Hamilton now for 18 years. One of the things, Speaker, after 18 years in this assembly, is that you've seen pretty well every trick in the book, and you call it out. So we know that the Liberal card trick they're going to play here is they will get some candidate, and that candidate will be so convincing that they'll convince the Minister of Health to go ahead with this.

Applause.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The minister applauds, because he's been here longer and he knows the card tricks better than I do, so he knows what's coming. I guess there's a preview. But I'll ask you this: If they ignored this for 18 months, they left it on the shelf for 18 months, do you really think the Liberals are behind it, or are they simply playing card tricks and games to try to skate by? It's pretty obvious, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to save most of my remaining time, then, for the leader of the third party and the NDP card trick on this. They just seem to be so out of touch when it comes to what's right and what's affordable. They're spinning—you'll hear the spin later today—this fallacy that you can have your cake and eat it too. First the NDP—they were clear, at least. First they said they wanted to build a new hospital, but they wanted to do it in Welland. At least they were clear about that. Then they said, "Well, there's a by-election so, okay, we want to build a Niagara hospital too." So they said they're going to build it in Welland and they're going to build it in Niagara. Then they said, "While we're promising everything under the sun, let's just keep all the hospitals open." The NDP approach is unrealistic, it's old-school politics and it's going to cost us that new hospital at the end of the day.

We don't want to go back, Speaker; we actually want to see us move ahead to a better tomorrow when it comes to health care services in the Niagara Peninsula. I think the NDP approach of being all things to everybody and building new sites and keeping the old open is going to put the entire project in jeopardy. I think it's going to be awfully hard to pitch to a new obstetrician who has graduated recently—I'll say she graduated from Western; that's where my health critic and I are from—and who wants to come to Niagara. You're going to tell her she has to run around to five different sites? I worry, then, we'll never attract that obstetrician; we'll never attract that specialist. She will simply choose to go somewhere else. That's the problem I have with the NDP policy: It's going to cost us the big hospital and it will mean we won't attract the specialists that we need in south Niagara because they're not going to run around to four or five sites. I think in their hearts they know this, I think in their guts they know this, but they're playing this old-school "have your cake and eat it too" politics that I worry is going to jeopardize what could be a once-in-a-generation opportunity for all of us who love Niagara and call it home.

Even Dr. Smith recognized the NDP game here. He called it "political theatre"—his words, Mr. Speaker, an exact quote—and this government and the third party were playing the old-school political game that voters now recognize at the drop of a hat. In the same breath, Dr. Smith also said this—and I noted it in my motion at the beginning, as I will now note again. He said that "it doesn't make financial or medical sense to build a new south Niagara hospital and keep the existing sites open." So said Dr. Smith, the medical expert. The savings, as I said, are \$285 million a year in capital and \$10 million in operating that we can actually put into better patient care and attracting more specialists. To me, when you look at the medical evidence, when you look at the need to move forward and not get locked into the past, when you look at the case to attract more specialists to south Niagara so we don't fall further and further behind, it's a slam-dunk; the case is clear. This should be exciting news. It should be something to be optimistic and thrilled about for

everybody who cares about this issue in Niagara and beyond. It should be a slam-dunk in this House, but I worry that it will not be. When it comes to an issue that makes a lot of sense both financially and medically, this House cannot get its act together, not even for one of the most valuable principles within this province's soul: the health care of the people that we're sent here to represent on a daily basis.

Let me conclude, Speaker, by saying this: I ask today for this House to join me and join the Ontario PC Party in upholding that valuable principle and obligation. A vote with us is endorsing my motion. It's the right time to do the right thing. It's time to show leadership. It's time to choose either A or B. I choose the new hospital and to move forward. It's not a time to choose all options on the table, because that's unrealistic.

So what is the vote here today? A vote is yes for a new south Niagara hospital. A vote is yes for more specialists and raising the quality of care. A vote is yes for the planning grant to give the green light to get this project moving. Speaker, I hope all members of the assembly will stand with me and say yes to a new south Niagara hospital and move that community forward for the quality of health care they deserve.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I was very interested in the Toryisms coming from the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party. They talk a lot about efficiencies, a lot about experts and systems, a lot about relieving administrative burden. But, Speaker, in typical Tory form, they barely talk at all about health care. They barely talk at all about patients and meeting the needs of actual people in south Niagara. It's unfortunate that that's the direction that this party has shown year after year after year when it comes to the health care of Ontarians.

I'm very pleased to join this debate, but I'm saddened to see that rather than it being a debate focusing on getting a hospital built in Niagara, it is yet another Conservative motion that has everything to do with politics and nothing to do with getting things done. This motion is designed to play a game of divide and conquer across the Niagara region, pitting one community against another and leaving Niagara residents falling further and further behind.

Let's talk about how we got here, Speaker. The last time the Conservatives formed a government in Ontario, they decided to close a heck of a lot of hospitals. In fact, at the last count, 29 hospitals were closed by the Conservatives. They never said they were closing hospitals, though, Speaker; they always used words like "amalgamation" or "merger." But the facts remain that community after community lost hospitals when Mr. Hudak sat at the cabinet table in the province of Ontario, not to mention that 6,000 nurses lost their jobs when Mr. Hudak sat at the cabinet table, not to mention opening the door to private services like private MRIs, private CT scans and private hospitals. The biggest merger of all—surprise, surprise, Speaker—was in Niagara, the region that he

boasts that he is from; he has done them well over the years, Speaker—where several hospitals were amalgamated into the Niagara Health System.

Over the years, the controversy has continued at the Niagara Health System, and patients are the ones that paid the price, Speaker. They lost an emergency department in Fort Erie and another emergency department in Port Colborne. A deadly *C. difficile* outbreak at the NHS's three largest hospitals raised serious questions, Speaker. A damning report by Ontario's Ombudsman pointed to a culture of secrecy throughout the Niagara region when it came to health care.

Last September, the Niagara Health System recommended the building of a new hospital in south Niagara. But it also recommended the closure of sites in Niagara Falls, Welland, Port Colborne, Fort Erie and Niagara-on-the-Lake. Not surprisingly, communities that stand to lose health care services are concerned about the impact of having to travel for care and the inability to access any of the many services that are currently available to them.

Some might want to pretend that shutting down health care services in four of Niagara's communities would have no impact whatsoever. But residents have heard this song before, Speaker, and they know that it simply is not true. Not only would an emergency department and two extended-hours urgent care centres be closed, but also numerous other health care services would be gone. These include in-patient and day surgery, dialysis stations, physiotherapy, recreational and occupational therapy, diagnostic imaging—such as mammograms, ultrasounds and colorectal screening—palliative care services, laboratory services, diabetes programs and others. The impact of forcing people to travel for this kind of care cannot be underestimated either in cost or in terms of the personal impact on patients, their families, their quality of life and, of course, the quality of service they actually are receiving.

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And who are the people who should know this the most? The people who should know this the most are the party that actually moved this motion. Not too long ago, Tim Hudak railed in this very House about the impact of cutting health services in the very communities that he wants to cut services in today. I wish that this guy would make up his mind. Note that today they do not support hospital services in any of these communities. They'll change their position regardless of the impact on local communities.

I quote from January 29, 2008: "Fort Erie is a robust, vibrant town of 30,000 people, and now Dalton McGuinty is closing down their hospital. Premier, you cannot leave the decision up to an unaccountable, unelected and largely anonymous LHIN board. Show some leadership. Show some courage." That was Mr. Hudak who was making those comments back in January 2008, but that's not all.

From October 29: "Under the McGuinty government's new LHIN scheme, emergency services and surgery will be eliminated from Douglas Memorial Hospital in Fort

Erie and Port Colborne General Hospital. Other hospital services, like maternity, will be taken out of Niagara Falls General. Just a year ago, neither your predecessor, the Premier nor your local Liberal candidates breathed a single word about these dramatic hospital service reductions." That would have been Mr. Hudak, at that time defending services in these community hospitals.

I think we can see a track record quite clearly here. This is a party that will say anything and do anything to win a by-election, but we know their track record very clearly. They shout from the sidelines, they play politics, but they never deliver any results for the people of Ontario.

Now, I have said clearly that I support a new Niagara Falls hospital, but I don't support playing divisive politics and pitting communities against one another. That's the playing ground of the Progressive Conservative Party in Ontario, not something that New Democrats like to do. New Democrats have always fought to protect the health care services of the people of this province, and we will continue to fight to protect your health care services in south Niagara. That's a job that we're proud of doing, and that we're going to continue to do.

We are going to push this government to build a new hospital to replace the aging hospital in Niagara Falls, but unlike what the Liberal government and Tim Hudak would have you believe, the price of a Niagara Falls hospital doesn't need to be the closure of every other hospital in the entire Niagara region. No one wants or needs their local hospital to close. There are other options to ensure that the people of Niagara continue to have access to local, high-quality public health care.

You know what? The government's appointed expert, who has been mentioned already today, and Mr. Hudak say that a new 400-bed Niagara Falls hospital will cost \$850 million, yet only five years ago in Peterborough they managed to build a hospital with 494 beds—almost a hundred beds more than what is being planned for Niagara—in a publicly funded model, for less than \$300 million: \$293 million for 494 beds, as opposed to \$850 million for 400 beds in Niagara Falls.

Now, I have to ask you, why would a similar-sized Niagara hospital cost almost three times more to build, and therefore mean the closure of every other public hospital in the region? Because the Liberal government's privatization plan to build hospitals drives the costs sky-high. You don't have to take my word for it; the Tory plan that the Liberals are now using has been criticized roundly by the Auditor General of this province, because it drives up costs and it does not deliver the kind of quality that we need to see and the keeping of taxpayers' dollars at the forefront when it comes to these kinds of projects.

I have to say that the New Democrats are very clear on what we want to see. We want to see public dollars pay for vital public health care for you, for your family, for the people of Niagara Falls and for the people of south Niagara.

We have been pretty crystal clear on our priorities. Our priority is not the privatization of health care in this

province. Our priority is the public delivery of health care in this province, and we think that precious public health care dollars should go to front-line care, not line the pockets of private companies or, for that matter, line the pockets of CEOs who have six-figure salaries in the public sector.

We are committed to finding savings by eliminating enormous government waste like we've witnessed in eHealth and Ornge and, of course, the gas plant cancellations. There are ways of doing things differently.

Liberals and Conservatives prefer to see their friends making out very well at the public trough. We believe that public hospitals are the way to go. We know that the Auditor General is on our side in that argument and that, in fact, the waste of public dollars is happening time and time again in the models that are being promoted by the Liberals and the Conservatives.

Most importantly, we need to move away from Liberal private partnership models of building hospitals in order to keep costs down, because it does exactly the opposite. It drives up costs, and as a result, it forces communities to have to choose to close and lose their hospital services. That is not what New Democrats support.

I am very, very pleased to be able to engage in this debate because New Democrats are doing so from a commitment to public services and to public health care for all Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm delighted to be able to participate in this debate. It's a divide-and-conquer resolution. I read the resolution, first of all, and what you have to do when you read these resolutions—remember, I've been in opposition and government. You have to see, is there a hostage in it? Is there something that will make both of the other parties vote against a new hospital for Niagara Falls? And yes, there is. There's a negative reference to the present administration so that if you vote for it, you have to vote for that negative reference. That's called a hostage.

What the member really wants, what the Conservative Party really wants, is for both of the other two parties to vote against this resolution—the NDP because they say they want to keep everything existing open and to build a new hospital, and the government because they made a negative reference to the government. So it's an old trick that has been used—not for the first time; I have to admit that—to try to divide and conquer. Really, in their heart of hearts, the members of the Conservative caucus would love to see both other parties vote against the resolution and they could be the knights in shining armour there to save a hospital after closing it.

There's one more in this case. I thought it was 28 hospitals that the Conservative government of Mike Harris had closed. I was corrected by the leader of the New Democratic Party, who said that it was in fact 29 hospitals that they had closed in the province.

I remember a debate where Mike Harris said at that time to, I guess, Robert Fisher, "It is not my intention to

close hospitals." Well, with the best of intentions they closed—and I know the person sitting in the chair would be opposed to this—some 29 hospitals in the province of Ontario.

What we have here—I'm thinking of this road to Damascus. It's a biblical allusion now. That road to Damascus is full of converts, those who have been converted, who changed on the road to Damascus. One group that has changed is the members of the Conservative Party. Before there was a by-election on the horizon in Niagara Falls—maybe I could be wrong—I can't recall much discussion on the part of the leader or the official opposition about a new hospital for Niagara Falls. I could be wrong, but only since the by-election have I heard questions about that and the Fort Erie Race Track and a number of other situations that have arisen. This is natural when a by-election is held, because there's a focus of attention. Again, I'm above the fray in that; I fully understand that's the case.

1430

I know that in St. Catharines we have a new hospital with all the amenities, a \$759-million hospital and a 30-year contract to operate the physical plant, which probably brings the total investment to about \$1.5 billion. That is substantial whenever you are establishing a hospital and a contract to operate the physical plant of that hospital. It is serving people exceedingly well. We appreciate that it is there.

I didn't see the party opposite campaigning for a new hospital in St. Catharines. In fact, there was much discussion for years and years. The Leader of the Opposition said, "Well, this is taking too long." I can remember that until this government got elected, there was no process or procedure in the direction of a new hospital in St. Catharines. I'm not blaming them. I'll tell you why I'm not blaming them. It takes time. It goes on a step-by-step basis, just as we're going through with the present observations and recommendations made by Dr. Smith.

I think of the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital, and I want to give the Leader of the Opposition credit in this regard. A lot of people don't like doing that for the leader of another party, but I want to give him credit. There was a budget that came up, and one of the hospitals that were not proceeding for funding was the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital, in the riding of the leader of the Conservative Party. He said at that time that he recognized why. He didn't exploit that. He said words to the effect that if we truly want to get that hospital built, we actually need to get the economy moving again so more people are paying taxes and creating jobs. In other words, he could have said, on a partisan basis, "Well, isn't it awful? They're not fighting for the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital." Of course, being from there, he would be supportive of it and is likely supportive of it. But because the whole philosophy of the Conservative government is not to spend money, is not to invest money on these kinds of services, he recognized that and said, "I understand why this is the case."

Meanwhile, there were hospital projects proceeding in Burlington and Cambridge—both, by the way, in Con-

servative ridings. I think there's one in Fergus as well—all in Conservative ridings. I heard my local radio station. The Conservatives said, "Well, you know, it's all partisan decisions." I can't remember the last time the Liberals won Burlington. For years, it was under the esteemed Cam Jackson, who was the member there for a number of years. Cambridge—I can't remember a Liberal being there for years, and Fergus, of course, has been the fiefdom of the man in the chair and his predecessor. I just wanted to indicate there was not partisanship there.

I'll tell you where I'd be worried.

Mr. Steve Clark: Where would you be worried, Jim? Tell us.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'd be worried for the Conservative members who represent rural ridings that have hospitals in them, because, as the leader of the New Democratic Party said, just a few years back, the leader of the Conservative Party was, in fact, saying how we should be saving all these individual hospitals. Apparently he's changed, and I understand that.

Listen, I understand how hard the decision is. The New Democratic Party in Saskatchewan closed 52 rural hospitals when they were in power. Did they do it to be mean to people? No, they didn't. They did it because they felt it would best serve the people of that province, and they were in difficult economic circumstances. I've never blamed the New Democratic Party for that. I have mentioned it in the House, but I have not blamed the New Democratic Party for doing that.

I was in conversation with one of the individuals who was prominent in raising funds for the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital. He said his greatest concern was, "Well, of course you people are now going to support, as the number one priority down here, the Niagara south hospital, and there goes West Lincoln, pushed further into the background." There may be something to that. I indicated my support for West Lincoln at the time. It's a project that I would like to see proceed, as I know the leader of the Conservative Party would, but we all face those realities.

So what has changed? Well, what has changed is that there's a by-election. There's a by-election upcoming in the riding of Niagara Falls. So now we get people standing up in the House—

Mr. John Yakabuski: When?

Hon. James J. Bradley:—asking questions day after day—

Mr. John Yakabuski: When are you calling it?

Hon. James J. Bradley:—even the member from Barry's Bay, who is out of his seat and heckling, I say to the Speaker. They have suddenly decided that Niagara Falls and a hospital in Niagara Falls are important. That is only because there's a by-election. Again, I understand that. Please, I'm not a person who condemns him for that.

But let the public know that we heard little about the Niagara Falls hospital until there was an impending by-election. Another rural member is coming forward into the House now from the Conservative Party. I want to warn him that his leader has now said that you can close

a number of the rural hospitals and consolidate into a new hospital. I know that happens, and I know the Conservative leader used to fight against that. Now he has decided that he's not going to fight against that because there's a by-election in Niagara Falls. If I were cynical, I would think that; I'm not a cynical person.

I met with officials of the Niagara Health System earlier this year. We talked about this hospital and the need for a planning grant, and that's exactly how we will proceed in this regard. It will go to the local health integration network, which deliberates over these matters. They will make the recommendation, and you proceed with a grant which is for planning purposes. Those are the steps you take. Just as it took years and years in St. Catharines for the previous Conservative government to move in any direction, when a new government came in, we didn't do it immediately. We had the planning grant and took the steps. We have a new hospital in the area at the present time. So I met with them; I said that it's a good suggestion and I would bring it to the Minister of Health. She certainly was very accepting of that particular suggestion by the Niagara Health System. There's nothing in this resolution that is new at all, that isn't already happening.

I mentioned the hostage in the resolution, and I won't go into that again. But if you want to get the two other parties to vote against it, you put a hostage in. So there's a hostage in, criticizing our government. You know something? That just is like water falling off the back of a duck. I don't care about that part of it. I care about the main thrust of it. I know it was meant as well to divide yourselves from the New Democratic Party because, as the member from Welland—who is here—would know, she has people in her community, both in Welland and in Port Colborne—

Ms. Cindy Forster: And in Wainfleet.

Hon. James J. Bradley:—and in Wainfleet. We're all interested in that area of the province. I don't think people should be critical of any individual standing up for a community, and they have tried to be critical of her in that regard. I don't do that because I think we all have to rally to our own communities.

This is an interesting resolution. I want to say, by the way, because people would be wondering, has there been an increase in funding over the years in Niagara since this government got in power? There has. Funding is up by over \$172 million, or 62%, since 2003 in Niagara. We've invested \$24 million to reduce surgical wait times in Niagara, and the investments are having their effect. There have been substantial investments.

I like the idea of a modern new hospital in Niagara south, just as we have a modern new hospital in Niagara north. I think that what has to be sorted out is, what are the consequences for other sites? How can the other sites be still serving the people in their community while a new hospital is being built? I know of the strong support for this of many of my friends in Niagara Falls and the close area of Niagara Falls.

It's great to see the Conservative Party converted on the road to Damascus to this particular resolution. There

were many smiles on faces as their leader was up there because I think they knew in their heart of hearts that this had more to do with the by-election than to do with health care in the Niagara region. Nevertheless, we are ones who want to move forward. The Minister of Health would tell you—

Interjection.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I think she was in Burlington, in fact, today at Joe Brant Hospital, and she was probably wondering—and I'm going to put this on the table and say that this is unfair before I even say it, okay? She was wondering why the Conservative members for Cambridge and Burlington and, dare I say, Fergus—my good friend from Fergus—would have voted against the last budget, which, in fact, provided for new hospitals in those areas. But that's unfair.

Interjections.

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Hon. James J. Bradley: No, that's unfair; I understand that, because there are other considerations. You know me: I'm next to non-partisan when it comes to these matters.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to be able to offer a few observations. I'm going to be delighted to see a brand-spanking-new hospital being constructed in Niagara Falls, and I know that our government is well on the way to making those kinds of decisions in the step-by-step process that every government follows in this regard.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Before I ask for further debate, I'm pleased to recognize and welcome to the Ontario Legislature the MPP for Niagara Falls from the 36th and 37th Parliaments, Mr. Bart Maves. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

Further debate.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: It is a pleasure to speak today to our PC opposition day motion that calls upon the government to recognize that Niagara Health System supervisor Dr. Kevin Smith recommended that consolidating existing hospitals in Niagara into a new Niagara south hospital will provide better services for patients and families. Certainly, we in the Ontario PC caucus believe that adopting Dr. Smith's recommendations will simplify physician and staff coverage to enhance response times, reduce wait times, attract and retain specialists and enhance the ability to invest in state-of-the-art equipment.

Last week, along with our leader, Tim Hudak, and our candidate from Niagara Falls, Bart Maves—who is here joining us today in the gallery, demonstrating his commitment to this proposal—we visited the Niagara Falls mayor, Mr. Jim Diodati, to discuss the health care needs of people in the south Niagara region. Mayor Diodati agreed that south Niagara needed a new hospital and that Dr. Smith's recommendation of the Lyons Creek location made the best financial as well as medical sense. Not only does the mayor of Niagara Falls agree with Dr. Smith's recommendation, but all six mayors of the southern region initially agreed with the proposal that a

new hospital would better serve the region in the long term, 10 to 15 years.

Two locations were identified, but Dr. Smith ultimately recommended the Lyons Creek property as the best choice geographically. Dr. Smith also recommended the closure of Douglas Memorial Hospital, Greater Niagara General Hospital, Port Colborne Hospital and the Welland Hospital. It's important to note, though, that in addition to the new Niagara south hospital, Dr. Smith also recommended that two urgent care centres be opened to serve the needs of the more distant communities. This new hospital would save approximately \$285 million in capital costs that would otherwise be spent in refurbishing the existing four locations and would also save another \$10 million annually in operating costs. That is a lot of money that could be put into hiring more specialists, more nurses and dealing with a host of other health care needs in the Niagara region. The new south Niagara hospital would also become a centre of excellence for women and children, with state-of-the-art facilities that would allow the Niagara area to attract the best.

The leader of the third party, as we heard earlier, recommends that we both build a new hospital and keep all four existing hospitals open. Quite simply, Mr. Speaker, that option makes absolutely no sense, and Dr. Smith himself said as much last week. Dr. Smith's report outlines the impracticality of continuing to operate four hospitals in addition to one new hospital. Let's go through his reasons why we cannot do that: (1) A lack of critical mass to provide expertise and procedures in clinical practice. (2) It would be a major increase in costs to duplicate equipment and infrastructure. (3) There would be an inability to recruit expertise with low-volume workloads in some of the locations. (4) The cost to maintain coverage when clinical volumes do not support physician income.

Instead, these funds should be used to provide direct patient care, not to supplement volumes. Dr. Smith also noted that the Niagara hospital system currently spends roughly \$2.2 million to provide on-call coverage when the volume of patients does not provide expected physician income. In other words, we're wasting money here, Mr. Speaker. We need to make sure that we use each health care dollar to the best possible advantage.

Dr. Smith's report also noted that business as usual is not even remotely an option. He then went on to say, "While projections into the future are by nature speculative, it can be expected that consolidation of services in the southern tier will be very cost-effective from both a capital and operating perspective. While health care costs will certainly continue to rise, the relative savings are undeniable."

Now, in his report to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on the restructuring of the Niagara Health System, Dr. Smith noted that budgets for hospitals in Ontario remain at a 0% increase and that health care costs are on the rise. The Niagara Health System cannot afford the operational costs of four hospitals that could be replaced by one. Dr. Smith noted that the forecasted

deficit for 2012-13 is \$13.7 million. For 2013-14, the deficit is expected to rise to \$21.7 million, and for 2014-15, the projected deficit is \$29.2 million. Clearly, urgent action needs to be taken to deal with this deteriorating financial situation.

I would say it's not just a deteriorating financial situation; it's a deteriorating situation from the perspective of patient care as well. In Ontario, we've recently seen cuts to physiotherapy services, a reduction in the availability of diabetes test strips, a reduction in cataract surgeries, and the list goes on and on. Ensuring that we make the best decision in Niagara will help to ensure that we don't see more cuts in services to the region. So it's clear that the construction of the new south Niagara hospital at the Lyons Creek location, along with the two urgent care centres, makes the best sense from a business as well as a patient care perspective.

We already know what the third party's view of the situation is: They don't think Dr. Smith knows what he's talking about and that the suggestion of the Lyons Creek location is "preposterous." To that, I would say that Dr. Smith is a well-recognized expert in this area and that his report has certainly been very well researched and obviously very well written—not to be taken for granted or taken lightly.

More interesting is the response of the Wynne Liberals and the Minister of Health. They've had Dr. Smith's report for 14 months and up till now silence, nothing—until today. The cynic in me would have to say this has something to do with the fact that Tim Hudak, Bart Maves and I were in Niagara Falls last week speaking about this. We met with the mayor, who obviously supports Dr. Smith's recommendations as well. But today, interestingly—how coincidental—the Minister of Health came out with a response indicating that Dr. Smith's recommendations were very well researched and that there is growing support for the concept of a new south Niagara hospital. Today, they announce that they're going to give a grant for planning so that the project can move forward—how coincidental. Yet we keep hearing from the other two parties that this is all political, that this is all about the fact that there is going to be a by-election at some point in Niagara Falls. Well, yes, we all know that, Mr. Speaker, and nobody is pure in this situation; let me say that.

But what we have in our favour is Dr. Smith's recommendations. Dr. Smith has written a clear, completely objective report which outlines what the best is for the people of south Niagara from both a financial perspective and a patient care perspective. We choose to follow that. It's good public policy, and it makes sense financially. For once, I would like to see this government make a decision on the basis of good public policy. I'm glad to see you're going ahead with the planning grant. Let's get this thing done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Cindy Forster: It is a big honour for me to stand up and speak about this issue today because this affects

my community and all of Niagara. You need to know that I've been involved with the Niagara Health System or its former sites for 40 years. A registered nurse, I worked at the Welland hospital, the Welland County hospital, the Port Colborne General Hospital and the Greater Niagara hospital. I've worked at just about all of them over the years, and I've represented nurses for the last 20 years in all of those sites.

It's interesting that Tim Hudak is taking the position that he's taking because he has a huge history of jumping on issues for political purposes, in this case a by-election in Niagara Falls. But I've got a number of quotes that I want to read to you about what Tim had to say. This was probably in 2011: "I've always said that Dalton McGuinty's decision to close the ER in Port Colborne was short-sighted and would reduce care for families and seniors in this community." "I've spoken with health experts, community leaders and local families and seniors. They've all told me that bringing these important health services back to the community is the right thing to do." But he talked to some more consultants, specialists and experts, and now he has changed his mind, just a year and a half later.

1450

I met a constituent of mine yesterday—I was in Tim Hortons getting a coffee—Terry Rogers, a Stelco retiree. He remembers when Tim Hudak stood in front of the Port Colborne hospital in 2011 and said, "I promise to keep this hospital open, and I promise to reopen the emergency department, and I don't really care about the other hospitals, whether or not they stay open." A week or two later he was in Fort Erie, giving the same message at the Fort Erie hospital. In the past, Tim has had a very negative view about the LHINs in Ontario. Why is he now coming out in full support of Kevin Smith's recommendation? Because there's a by-election.

Here are some quotes from Tim on the LHINs: "A question to the Acting Premier—I want to first welcome the Yellow Shirt Brigade"—this was a group of citizens that actually brought 5,000 people out to Fort Erie and 2,500 people out to Port Colborne to support keeping their hospitals open. He says, "I want to first welcome the Yellow Shirt Brigade to the Legislature here today, tireless advocates for health care in Fort Erie and Port Colborne."

"Sadly, the Yellow Shirt Brigade has witnessed the closure of the 24-hour ER in Fort Erie under Dalton McGuinty. Then Dalton McGuinty hid behind the veils of his LHIN to justify this cut in health care. To add insult to injury, André Marin, the Ombudsman, did an investigation of LHIN decision-making in Hamilton and Niagara, and you've buried that in this circus of a show that you put the Ombudsman through these last number of months."

"I ask the Acting Premier: Will you do the right thing? Will you reopen the ... ER in Fort Erie? If you don't, a PC government will."

"LHINs—these creatures are a mess."

"You have designated Fort Erie as a growth community. It's a robust, vibrant town of 30,000 people, and

now Dalton McGuinty is closing down their hospital. Premier, you cannot leave the decision up to an unaccountable, unelected and largely anonymous LHIN board. Show some leadership; show some courage. Will you step in and set this decision aside and keep that hospital open?" That was Tim Hudak. We weren't hearing that today, were we?

"In the McGuinty government's new LHIN scheme, emergency services and surgery will be eliminated from Douglas Memorial Hospital in Fort Erie and Port Colborne.... Will you stay true to your campaign promises, set aside this tainted process and preserve these vital hospital services in these communities?" We didn't hear that today from Tim Hudak either.

You know, I'm really concerned that people can actually flip and change their mind overnight because there's a by-election. Health care shouldn't be about by-elections. It should be about what's good for the community. It should be about community interests.

Hudak said the LHINs weren't progress: "We need to build on what works." LHINs "have failed to integrate care and build off existing infrastructure...." Today, he stood here and he said exactly the opposite.

I sent out a survey in 2011, when Kevin Smith was just starting to formulate his recommendations. He did a survey at the time as well. My survey went out to 49,000 homes in Niagara. It strongly recommended that people wanted to preserve their health care services in their communities while improving current services.

The Pollara study that Kevin Smith commissioned said the same thing. People basically said, "Yes, a new south Niagara hospital would be nice, but not at the expense of closing hospitals and health services across the rest of the communities."

I don't think that the government or the Tories are listening to the people who live in Niagara. The health minister, only a week or two ago in question period, when asked by the leader of the official opposition about whether or not she was going to give the planning grant to make sure that this new south Niagara hospital moves forward—Ms. Matthews indicated that there still wasn't community buy-in. "We're taking our time. There's no consolidated consensus."

Today, she jumps in with her new news release here and says, "There is growing local support for his proposal. Our government is listening closely to the community's views on what the future of health care should look like in Niagara." Well, why is that? Why did this come out today? Because it's "oppo" day, there's a by-election, and of course we want to keep that Liberal seat that has been held for nine or 10 years in Niagara.

But, you know, it seems to me that the Liberal government is prepared to go ahead with this plan, claiming they're listening closely to the community's views, but I don't think they've spoken to the mayor of Welland, Barry Sharpe, or the mayor of Port Colborne, Vance Badawey, or the mayor of Wainfleet, April Jeffs, or their councils.

Barry Sharpe, of Welland, wishes he had never taken part in the process to discuss a new south Niagara hospi-

tal. Mayor Vance Badawey, from Port Colborne, feels betrayed, because the unanimous consent for choosing either of the sites was based on retaining the services in Port Colborne and Fort Erie. He has also stated that Port Colborne prefers the central Welland site, should there be a new south Niagara hospital.

So I don't think the minister is actually concerned that there are mayors of two large cities and one smaller town who want to preserve their services in Niagara.

There was a study done in the United Kingdom, and that report came out in October 2012. That report basically says that mergers and amalgamations don't work. In the study—it was the Bristol Institute of Public Affairs—they found that mergers were not helpful to public systems; they were the enemy.

Starting in 1997, they underwent their own restructuring, merging 112 of 223 acute care hospitals, and the merged hospitals fared the worst. Financial performance declines; labour productivity does not change; wait times for patients rise; and there's no indication of an increase in clinical quality. Why is that? You know what? It's very simple: less sites, less beds, less patients, less nurses.

Nobody is even considering the impact that amalgamation actually has on jobs. We talk here every day—the Tories particularly talk every day about their jobs plan. At the same time, they're wanting to force amalgamation and create more job losses in an area of this province that can ill afford to lose any more jobs.

Interjection: Those jobs don't count.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Those jobs don't count, because they're good-paying jobs. They pay more than 10 bucks an hour.

The United Kingdom has already done the study.

I think that the Ministry of Health and the Liberal government have failed miserably. This restructuring has been going on since the Harris days, 20 years ago, and no one has ever done any final study to determine what the effects of all these mergers and amalgamations have been on patient outcomes. Yes, they're driving wait times—wait times for surgeries, wait times for knee replacements and hip replacements—but neither the Tories nor the Liberals have ever done a study to determine what outcomes there have been for patients.

Well, I can tell you, as a nurse—I can tell you, as someone who represented nurses for the last 20 years—what the outcomes have been. The outcomes have been things like, at the Niagara Falls hospital, the Welland hospital, the St. Catharines hospital, C. difficile outbreaks, MRSA outbreaks, because of overcapacity, because of 100 people a day waiting in admit-no-beds in the emergency departments because there wasn't a bed to put them in. That was the result of mergers and amalgamations in the NHS.

The amalgamation of the NHS back in 2000, I think it was, was a mess from the get-go. It was the largest merger that has ever taken place in this province, and they were underfunded to boot, up until fairly recently.

We always hear, "Well, it's going to save all this money." Well, in fact, the London Free Press has an

article, I think, from 2012 for London, Ontario. The cost of that merger was \$1.3 billion in London, Ontario. That's what it cost. That \$1.3 billion would have better served for front-line patient care.

I can tell you, in the Niagara Health System to date, there have been millions and millions of dollars paid out in severance pay. I would hazard a guess that there isn't one VP or one director any longer who is even from the Niagara Peninsula. They've all been parachuted in from Hamilton, from Mississauga, from Toronto, you name it. There is nobody who lives in Niagara, who knows Niagara, who is left there. All of that money that went to severance packages should have actually gone to service patient care.

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I'm very concerned about the proposal that's coming forward. I don't think it's going to meet the needs of the patients or the people who live in my community, in an area where we have a high number of seniors and it's growing.

Now, we talk about petitions. I've already submitted 20,000 petitions from the residents of Niagara, and here's a whole pile more to be submitted with respect to the proposal that Tim Hudak is putting forward today.

Nobody takes into account geography or travel or the lack of public transportation in Niagara. It could take somebody on our public transportation system—which is still only a trial, I believe; Mr. Maves would know that. It's still a trial, the regional public transportation system. It could take somebody as long as five hours to get from Fort Erie to a new hospital if they had to take public transportation, just because of the way the routes run.

Back to the local opinions: Barry Sharpe and Vance Badawey have both come out against the PC plan. Sharpe states that with the projected population growth in east Fonthill, west Port Robinson and north Welland, the population can support its own hospital. Does Niagara Falls need a new hospital? Absolutely. The Niagara Falls hospital was old when I was young, which I am no longer, and they needed a new hospital then. Do we support a new Niagara Falls hospital? Absolutely, we do. Niagara Falls needs a new hospital, but so do the communities in south Niagara, which need a hospital to support our population and our seniors.

Certainly, the Welland city council and their health care committee are behind keeping the local hospital open. The Port Colborne mayor, Vance Badawey, once again, said that his support was contingent upon his site and the Fort Erie site remaining open. Badawey said he was glad that Horwath recognized the services at the two locations, and Barry Sharpe said that Horwath was on the right track.

Speaker, I think that Mr. Hudak and the Tories need to come down to Niagara and have a look at what we have there and what we're concerned about.

While I've just got a few minutes here, I just want to talk about—Tim Hudak talked about this being his hometown of Fort Erie. Now he lives in Grimsby and he's got friends and family who live in Fort Erie. Well, I

can tell you that when the Vertis plant closed in Stevensville, you didn't see Tim Hudak on the picket line. He didn't even return the calls of those workers in that community. If you call that supporting people who live in Fort Erie, in Stevensville, in his riding, I don't.

When the board and the CEO of the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital came forward when their redevelopment plan got trashed in the 2012 budget by the Liberals, Tim Hudak was nowhere to be seen. He wasn't interested in moving forward in that redevelopment project until the money situation, the fiscal situation, was cleared up here in the province. But now—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I try not to interrupt the debate, but on a number of occasions you referred to the member for Niagara West—Glanbrook by his personal name. It would serve to remind all members of the House that that's not the way we do things. If it's a minister, you refer to them by their ministry title. If it's a member of the Legislature, you refer to them by their riding. I think you know the name of the riding that we're talking about. I would ask the member to do that in future, in the remainder of her remarks.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Speaker, I apologize for that.

In closing, I'm going to continue to fight for the constituents in my riding and across south Niagara in preserving the very important hospital and health services in my riding and in Niagara South, and so should Tim Hudak and the Tories—

Interjection.

Ms. Cindy Forster:—and so should the leader of the official opposition, and so should the Minister of Health.

P3s: Andrea talked a bit about—or the leader of the third party, I guess, my leader, talked a little bit about P3s and the cost of actually paying your friends instead of using that money to provide front-line health care. The Minister of the Environment spoke about that. He talked about the \$800-million hospital in St. Catharines, but in fact, at the end of the day, it's about a \$1.5-billion investment. There's another \$700 million that could be going to front-line health care instead of paying your friends.

We in the NDP are committed to public services. We're committed to public health care. I'm going to continue to fight for the constituents in my riding.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate. I feel like I'm at an all-candidates meeting for a by-election that is yet to be called. Certainly that's shaping up here.

What I'm hearing, obviously, is two parties putting forward a very, very different approach to the health care needs of constituents in the Niagara area, and I think there's a good reason for that. I think any public opinion poll you see over the years—and this goes back, certainly since I've been in politics—will bring you back information that tells you that one of the things the constituents in almost any jurisdiction are concerned about, more than anything else, is their health care: their hospital services,

doctors, prescriptions and pharmaceuticals. Obviously, it's an issue that's near and dear to the hearts of them and their families.

I went through this myself when I was first elected in 2003. There really was no plan for a new hospital in Oakville. There was talk about the need for a new hospital. Certainly the hospital, an excellent hospital, was operating under circumstances that simply needed to be changed. The site of Oakville-Trafalgar Memorial Hospital was quite limited. The building had been added to by previous governments over the years and there was simply nowhere else to go. There were more people moving to Oakville.

There was a process undertaken. Starting from 2003, instead of talking about building a new hospital, we decided we were going to build one. We decided we were going to build the right hospital in the right location. The way we did that was that we went out and we engaged the community. We involved the community. We listened to the people in the hospital and health care field around the region, and we listened to people like Dr. Kevin Smith, who has brought forward a report with some very strong recommendations saying that if you're going to look after the health care needs to the best of your ability in the Niagara region, you should follow these recommendations, and that this would be a good way of doing it.

I should point out at this point in time that these are just recommendations. They're very well thought out recommendations, in my opinion. I think that obviously an awful lot of expert work has gone in to getting them to this point, and they are in the hands of the government and a decision will be made in the very near future. The LHIN has been involved in these discussions. The community has been involved in these discussions. During the period of time that we were going through the planning for the Oakville hospital, certainly, there was a variety of opinions as to where that hospital site should go. The council was engaged. The councillors were engaged; the neighbourhoods were engaged; the doctors were engaged. At the end of the process, we arrived at a site that I thought was a very, very good site.

I'm pleased to report that the hospital is under construction right now. It is, I would think, about 50% built. It's on budget, it's on time, and the people of Oakville now are looking forward to something that is realistic, that is a building that is tangible, whereas in the past the process of the previous government was to talk about hospitals, but if they were famous for anything, it was for closing hospitals, not for opening hospitals.

Since we came to power in 2003, I can look at a list right here that has got 17 hospitals that have been completed: William Osler in Brampton; Royal Ottawa; West Parry Sound; Peterborough Regional; Thunder Bay Regional; Mattawa; Runnymede Healthcare Centre; Bloorview kids rehab, which we all know; Sudbury Regional; Pembroke Regional; Sioux Lookout; Sault Area Hospital; North Bay Regional Health Centre; Woodstock General Hospital; Samia's Bluewater Health; Niagara Health System; and Bridgepoint Health.

Under construction, we've got my hospital; Halton Healthcare Services; St. Joseph's Health Care in London; St. Joseph's Healthcare in Hamilton; Cornwall Community Hospital; Humber River Regional Hospital; Women's College Hospital.

You can go to Joe Brant; we're putting an addition on Joe Brant right now. Milton is going to get a fantastic renovation, in Ted Chudleigh's riding. But these are all hospitals that have been planned, that have been planned the right way. The expertise has been listened to and now they've turned into projects that are actually bricks and mortar, doctors and nurses and all the expertise that goes along with a proper health care system.

1510

I'm standing here today saying that I will support this motion because, in my estimation, what it's saying is we should do what this government said it was going to do all along, that this is the right way to plan for a hospital. I realize that everyone's anticipating a by-election and that people are looking forward to having a debate on this, I would imagine, in the future. And there's a differing view. You had the third party just express the view that somehow you can keep all these hospitals open and you can build a big regional one.

The opposition is coming forward with a motion that I think is probably the way to go and the one I'll be supporting, and that is to listen to the expertise and to move ahead the way that we would have moved ahead in any event. If it needs to be said again, that's fine. I think you'll find support—

Interjection: Already being done.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Yes. You'll find support from this side of the House. We're supporting it. That's why we appointed Dr. Kevin Smith to do this work in the first place, so that he would come forward with the recommendations that he's come forward with.

It seems to me that what we're saying today is we're going to reconfirm the procedure or the process to build a new hospital that was put in place by this government. It's worked in the past. It's worked in all of the other places that I read out—17 completed and another six under construction: Joe Brant, Milton is under construction, Georgetown is under construction, the emergency room there that was needed so badly—part of Halton Healthcare Services—and now Fergus, Speaker.

There's a variety of needs that drive the growth of hospitals. In the case of Milton and Oakville, and Burlington to some extent, it was population growth. There was just a lot of people moving into those communities at the same time, and a plan was put in place to make sure that the health care needs were there to accommodate those people.

So if we look past the rhetoric of the day, I think you've got two parties across the room that are trying to position themselves as best they can on an issue that is obviously of importance to the people of Niagara region. I think if they look at the track record of this government as far as building hospitals, they'll find a list that runs off the page. They'll also find a government and a party that

are committed to a process that leads to the completion of those hospitals.

If you want to talk about hospitals, there's a number of ways you can talk about them. If you want to build them, and you want to build them efficiently and effectively, I think there's a process you have to undertake—that should be undertaken. That's what we're purporting to do today.

I'm getting a hospital in my community, Speaker, that is triple the size of the existing one. I'm getting a hospital in my community as the result of the process that was undertaken. It's got an oncology centre. People in Oakville in the past did not have access to cancer care; now they will as a result of this. It's a \$2.7-billion investment—a huge investment, the largest investment that any government, local, regional, or federal, has ever made in the town of Oakville. It's one that is met, I think, with the approval and satisfaction of people from all political parties. They know it's the right thing to do.

The right thing to do in the Niagara region is to follow the process that's been outlined.

I'll be supporting the motion today. I'd urge all members of the House to come together and support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure for me to join in the debate. I have to tell you first, Speaker, through you to the member for Oakville, that I really appreciated his address and the fact that he is going to be voting in favour of this motion. When the Minister of the Environment spoke, I wasn't so sure, because he talked about some of the paragraphs—one particular paragraph in this motion that he didn't like. I just want to say that we have these opposition day resolutions. I wasn't particularly fond of a passage in the New Democrat opposition day last week and still I voted in favour of it as well because we need to send a message when some things need to move forward.

I know everyone has their own little relationships. I know the Minister of the Environment and the member for Welland obviously have a vested interest in this report and in the Niagara Health System. So does my leader, Tim Hudak, the member for Niagara West—Glanbrook, and the member for Niagara Falls who was here for a number of years, up until just recently.

The thing that I researched—and I read the report. I got the report printed out. I looked at it; I reviewed it. I was very interested in the dynamics of the report, how it happened.

I look at my own riding of Leeds—Grenville. When I was in municipal politics a number of years ago, there was a discussion in the local community of Brockville about the two hospitals, the Brockville General Hospital and the St. Vincent de Paul Hospital. There was a woman, Jean Macintosh, who led the process of discussion which ultimately ended up in the general merging of those two hospitals, and operating one now as the Garden Street site as well as the main site.

I know we have discussions about how health care is provided locally. I meet with front-line health care pro-

fessionals all the time, whether they be at the Brockville General or at the Kemptville District Hospital or just outside my riding. The member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington has a hospital in Smiths Falls that was just recently renovated that serves the top end of my riding.

Given the proximity of Leeds—Grenville, obviously, we have folks who get service in Ottawa at some of the Ottawa hospitals, in Kingston at some of the Kingston hospitals, and I appreciate that. I know that the Minister of Community Safety is here, and she knows I don't run into Ottawa and make derogatory comments about the government, because I recognize that in my riding, health care is provided in a number of facilities, both inside and outside of Leeds—Grenville. That's just the way it is. That's just the way that having a rural riding is, in terms of health care.

I looked to the Leader of the Opposition, my leader, Tim Hudak, and I talked to him about this report. I was surprised at some of the comments that were being made. I did some research and looked at his comments supporting this process, back to May 2012, months before this final report was tabled in September 2012. I know that he has spoken to Kevin Smith numerous times, since his appointment, about this report and about the services that would be provided in the local communities. He met with the NHS leadership about three weeks ago on that famous planning grant that was talked about earlier, the one that I think folks in that riding wanted some answers on, and I'm glad the minister gave the answer. I'm not going to comment about the timing of the answer.

I know there was some concern in the riding. I know that the member had an event, a round table, in his riding about this. I know a number of doctors approached Tim about whether the government was going to be doing this. There was some concern, so I'm glad that the member for Oakville and perhaps others speak in favour of this.

But anyone who reads this report, Speaker, knows the amount of detail Mr. Smith has put into its recommendations. I was surprised, after they chose the Niagara Falls and the Welland site through that consultation process that included the local mayors, that was chaired by the regional chair, that involved speaking to a number of individuals and groups—when you start looking at the details, there was an unbelievable amount of consultation done in the areas affected.

But to determine the final site location between Welland and Niagara Falls—I was surprised to understand the level of detail that Mr. Smith went to, to get into that recommendation. He brought together various Niagara region urban planners who looked at issues like traffic patterns, road access, road closures and growth projections to figure out what site would be the best option. He also took all that data to an expert geographer from McMaster, who then said the Niagara Falls site was an appropriate, good location. Then he also took that same information to a geospatial geographer, who also agreed. I was so surprised at that, that that level of detail

would be done by Mr. Smith, as the supervisor, to get to this point with the recommendation. It was very, very impressive.

1520

Again, anyone, any of the members who look at this report, will see some of the recommendations. I know that our critic, Ms. Elliott, quoted from page 39 earlier about the fact that, "While some would prefer a full-service hospital in every community, we now know that is not feasible in today's environment for the following reasons:

- lack of critical mass to provide expertise in procedures and clinical practice;

- major increase in costs to duplicate equipment and infrastructure (buildings);

- inability to recruit expertise with low-volume workload;

- costs to maintain coverage when clinical volumes do not support physician income." I'll use the last point of point four: "These funds should be used to provide direct patient care, not to supplement volumes." So when we talk about patient care, I think Kevin Smith looked at every aspect that needed to be done.

It's a tough decision. I want to go back to the budget. The budget rescoped my hospital expansion at Brockville General. I remember sitting in this chamber listening to the budget. I rushed upstairs. The first phone call I made was to the then CEO of Brockville General. I asked if he wanted me to rail against the government, and they said no. They accepted the government's decision to rescope their hospital project as part of the budget process, and they decided they were going to work with the LHIN and the local community to get it done. I accepted what the CEO, on behalf of the staff and board chair, said. Does it mean I'm still not going to meet with front-line staff? I'm still going to meet with them. I'm still going to meet with anyone involved in the delivery of health care in my riding, and I'm going to come and speak on their behalf every time I can.

But when you look at this report and look at the savings—I was surprised not just at the \$879-million cost savings that option one would provide, but also the \$9.5 million savings annually on the cost. So this report, Speaker, for any member that has not read it, is a very interesting read, not just what's in the document but also the level of consultation that Kevin Smith had done.

I wanted to get these comments on the record in support of my leader and my other caucus members. I want to thank you, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to put some comments on the record this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I will use the few minutes that are left on the clock for the NDP to talk a little bit about some of the recommendations that Dr. Kevin Smith had made and that form the basis for the motion that the Progressive Conservative Party has brought forward in this House today.

The first thing I want everybody to understand is that I come from northeastern Ontario. I represent people who

get most of their care in small, rural hospitals. There are close to 50 of them throughout Ontario. Since I have been here, since the Liberal government has been in power, not once have we talked about: How do we make small and rural hospitals good hospitals? How do we make sure that the care they provide is as good as one can get, for all of those Ontarians in northern and rural communities that depend on those small hospitals? Because, make no mistake, what Dr. Kevin Smith is proposing is the closing of many small hospitals, like we have seen. When they were in power, they came through with the hospital restructuring commission and closed hospitals in every part of this province. And now we're seeing something similar again—not to be outdone by the Liberals, though. They brought forward a bill called the Excellent Care for All Act. That sounds good, eh? They got an A+ for the title. But when you start to look at what's in excellent care for all, what it says sort of makes sense.

If you build centres of excellence and you make sure that people get really, really good at doing hundreds and thousands of the same things, if you do 1,000 knee surgeries every year, you will be very good at doing that knee surgery. You will do it with the best practices and the best time, with the cheapest—and it will be very good, and good for those people who live next to that centre of excellence. But for the people I represent and for everybody who lives in northern and rural Ontario, what does that mean? That means that services are not available in our communities anymore because the small and rural hospitals—nobody looks at them. We say, "To do a knee surgery in a rural hospital costs way too much money. We can do this way cheaper in a big central hospital, in a centre of excellence that does really, really good work." But it always comes at a cost. And this cost is always borne by the same people. This cost is borne by the people who live in northern and rural Ontario, who depend on their small hospital. We are now on a path where—I call it this: Our small hospitals will self-implode. So you tell them that you can't do hips and knees anymore because, you know, go down to the big centres and they can do them way cheaper and with good outcomes. I don't disagree with that. But for some people, going to that big centre means they're not going to get that care. It is just too hard to miss work, to go out there. You have no family; you know nobody, and it's just—it becomes a barrier to access.

Then you tell the small little hospital, "You can't do births and deliveries anymore, because if you don't do 50 of them a year you are a risk to society. You should never do them if you don't do at least 50 a year." So not only do they lose their orthopedic department, where you get your hips and knees done—because the big hospitals do them way cheaper—they also lose their obstetrics. Because you know, if you don't deliver 50 babies, apparently you cannot deliver any. Nobody looked at how we make sure the people who work there keep their skills up so that they can continue to deliver care in small and rural hospitals. No, no, no; nobody looks at that. Nobody looks at how we make a small hospital a good hospital.

You say, “You don’t do enough deliveries in a year, therefore you won’t be allowed,” and you back this up with quality care: “You’re not meeting the quality care standard”—it was decided that 50 was the magic number, and if you did not have this, too bad for you. All of these women now have to go to a big centre of excellence, away from where they live, to deliver their baby. Forget about close to home; forget about being surrounded by the people you love. You deliver in a community you don’t know, hopefully with your partner by your side, and days later the rest of the family will get to meet their brother or sister, the newborn baby.

What does that mean for the small hospital? It means that now they have lost their orthopedic surgeon, because without doing hips or knees, he or she could not make a practice in your community anymore. It means that you’re losing your obstetricians, because if you’re not going to do 50 deliveries, you’re not going to be allowed to do them at all. And then the small and rural hospitals start to self-implode. You don’t have enough work to keep an anesthetist busy—those are the people who put you to sleep. If you’re not doing obstetrics anymore and you’re not doing orthopedics anymore, there’s not much work for your anesthetist, who decides to leave. Once your anesthetist leaves, how do you keep your emergency room open if you don’t have an anesthetist on staff? Then the recruitment and retention issue becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Once you have enough services out of the small and rural hospital, they have such a hard time recruiting and retaining a stable workforce that they will automatically lose other services, because if you don’t have an anesthetist on staff, forget it; you’re not having an emergency room, because how do you do surgery if you cannot put people to sleep? We don’t do that kind of thing without an anesthetist, and it starts to go downhill from now on.

So when we hear things like, “It will help recruit and it will help keep staff”—how does it go? It “will provide better services for patients and families by simplifying physician and staff coverage to enhance response times and reduce wait times; attracting and retaining specialists because of increased workload; and investing”—etc. I have nothing against that; it’s all good. Centres of excellence are good. But we have to realize when we make those decisions that they come with a cost, and this cost is that you’ve just put barriers to access for a whole bunch of people who don’t live next to that centre of excellence.

1530

What I would like to see and what the NDP would like to see: You’ve seen some of that work before, in the budget last year. In the 2012-13 budget, we said that in order for us to support the budget, we needed to see at least \$20 million invested in our small and rural hospitals. Why did we put that in? Well, because we think that every Ontarian should have equitable access to health care. What does equitable access mean? Well, I can guarantee you that Foley and Gogama will never do brain surgery, and that the little hospital in Espanola will

never do complicated surgery either. I don’t say “equal”; I say “equitable access.”

The first line of primary care, the first line of acute care services, can easily be provided in rural hospitals. It happens all over the world. If you go to any industrialized country, whether you go to Australia or you go to the UK, if you go anywhere where people live in rural areas, you will see thriving small and rural hospitals that provide top-notch care within health quality guidelines. We don’t have any of that in Ontario.

In Ontario, all we see is that we will build you this P3 hospital as a centre of excellence, and all the programs and services will all be there and it will be so good. All of that is true—it will be so good—but it will come at a cost. It will come at a cost of access to all of the good people who don’t happen to live next to the centre of excellence. To me, this is a huge step back.

To pretend that if you go to a hospital that has all of the new, high-tech technology, that people will be healthier, is a myth that none of us in here should be repeating. It is not high-tech medicine that keeps people healthy; it is the determinants of health. Access to care is just a very small part of this, but we keep repeating and repeating this myth, that if we have all the high-tech stuff in one big, shiny new hospital, everybody will get healthier. That couldn’t be further from the truth, Mr. Speaker. That couldn’t be further from the truth.

What does the NDP want to do? They want to bring balance; they want to bring equity of access to health care to every Ontarian, no matter where they live. They don’t believe in the Liberal way of centres of excellence where, if you don’t live next to it, you don’t get care. And they don’t believe in the PC way either, where you can merge and merge and merge hospitals and make great big ones, and to hell with you if you don’t live close to one of those, I suppose. I’m sure they don’t say this, but the end result is the same.

The end result is the same: You have people with good access and people without. To bring an equity lens through those decisions, we would make different decisions. If we took as a basis that everyone matters, that everyone should have equitable access, then the decisions we put forward will look very different than some of the decisions we have in front of us.

Do some of the hospitals need to be updated? Absolutely. Do people deserve to have access to high technology when it’s needed? Absolutely. But people also need access in their own community, where their loved ones come and visit them and where they’re on the journey of getting better closer to home.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for recognizing me to speak about this motion. I speak a little bit personally about this particular issue and how it impacts around Niagara Falls. I think many of the members know that when my family and I moved to Canada almost 25 years ago—it will be 25 years on December 26 this year—we moved to Niagara Falls.

That's where we first started our home in Canada, and I'm very proud to have attended Westlane Secondary School, where I graduated before going to university.

Obviously, there is a very soft spot in my heart for Niagara Falls and the people of Niagara Falls, as it was my first hometown when I came to Canada. It was the great people of Niagara Falls who welcomed my family and me and got us engaged in the community—I remember getting involved in the local community and local politics. Vince Kerrio, the MPP at that time, served that community very well for many, many years and was a minister in Mr. Peterson's government as well.

But I also have a very soft spot for the Niagara Health System and the care they provide for the people of Niagara Falls and the region, because my parents were involved in a very serious car accident in the early 1990s—about 1990 or 1991—at the intersection of the Niagara Veterans Memorial Highway and Stanley Avenue, which is not that far, a stone's throw away, from the Niagara Falls general hospital.

My parents were, as I said, involved in a very serious car accident, and they were in the hospital for quite a few days—I think a couple of weeks. It was the great doctors, nurses and other health care providers who took care of my parents who made a huge difference on the road to recovery, and I thank them. I think this is my first opportunity publicly to be able to speak in this House and thank all those good people many, many years ago for saving my parents' lives and giving the opportunity for them to continue to grow and build a very healthy and strong life here in Canada.

Niagara Falls is a very vibrant community. It's got a big heart. It's a great economy, and as the community continues to grow, of course, it's important that there remain modern health services available in Niagara Falls. That's why I was very happy when our government, our Minister of Health, appointed Dr. Kevin Smith to the Niagara Health System to bring services back into shape and put them in a strong position. Dr. Smith has done a great job as our government put him into that position, ensuring that we continue to deliver high-quality health care to the people of Niagara Falls and the surrounding area.

Obviously, as we know, and as has been discussed in this House, Dr. Smith has been working and putting together a case for a new hospital in south Niagara, because it is needed, and there is, as we know, growing local support for that. Our government is listening very closely to communities' concerns, looking at the viability of a south Niagara hospital, as has been recommended by Dr. Smith.

As we have done in every instance—I can speak to my experience in Ottawa, in my community of Ottawa Centre, where the Ottawa heart institute is going through a development—there is a process that takes place. The Ministry of Health works very closely with the local health integration network. There are many stages in the process one goes through in order for a project to come into place. It's not something that is done overnight. I

would say there is obviously a lot of science involved in making a project like that happen.

The LHIN and the Niagara Health System are engaged in their work, and they are doing that quite diligently. Of course, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, under the leadership of our Minister of Health, Deb Matthews, has been doing that, and will continue to do that work with the Niagara community.

1540

Like I said, there are many steps that must be taken in order to get a hospital built, and it's very good to see that the official opposition now actually supports building a new hospital in the Niagara community. I recall, Speaker, that when the official opposition was in government, they closed 18 hospitals. They closed hospitals in my community of Ottawa Centre. Grace general, which it seems like half of Ottawa was born at, no longer exists, unfortunately, whereas our government has made sure that every hospital in Ottawa continues to grow.

It was the official opposition which was going to close the only French teaching hospital in all of Ontario, the Montfort—

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Shame.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: —which was shameful, because it was going to disenfranchise this whole French-speaking community. Our Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, the MPP for Ottawa-Vanier, Madeleine Meilleur, fought tooth and nail, along with our government of former Premier McGuinty, to make sure that Montfort did not close. I'm very proud that Montfort did not close. In fact, it has doubled in size. It is one of the best teaching hospitals in Canada. But the short-sighted decisions that the official opposition and the leader of the official opposition, who was part of that cabinet, would have made would have been devastating to my community in Ottawa.

I can go on in terms of investments we have made in the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario; the investments we have made in the Ottawa Hospital, both at Civic, which is in my riding, and the general hospital; and the investments we continue to make at the Queensway Carleton Hospital in the west end. Like I said, we're now making a \$200-million investment in expanding the Ottawa heart institute, which is one of the best cardiology institutions in North America, as ranked. All this to say, Speaker, that our government is the government that over the last 10 years has now built, I think, roughly 20 new hospitals across this province. We have a solid track record.

There's a process that must be followed. That process is being pursued in Niagara. The work that Dr. Kevin Smith, who was appointed by our government to make sure that there's strong health care service being provided to the Niagara community, is continuing on. The LHIN and Niagara health services are working closely to make sure that all steps are followed and that there is a new hospital in south Niagara.

I'm happy to see a conversion take place in the official opposition. I think they're starting to see, albeit for by-

election purposes or not, that health care is necessary. I hope that their election platform will not include cuts to hospitals, will not include cuts to doctors, will not include cuts to nurses and other great health professionals who make sure that our communities remain healthy, just like my parents got great health care in Niagara.

My community in Ottawa continues to get good care because of the investments that we're making in our local hospitals.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure today to follow my colleagues Steve Clark, from Leeds–Grenville; Christine Elliott, from Whitby–Oshawa; and of course our leader, Tim Hudak, from Niagara West–Glanbrook. I want to make sure I put on the board here that our leader, Tim Hudak, was the first on the record to support this.

All of my colleagues spoke very eloquently about the detail of the research that has been done. Just now, Mr. Naqvi talked about the appointment of Kevin Smith by their government, and I'm hoping, Mr. Speaker, that this won't be another case like the Don Drummond report, where, again, they wanted to bring in their expert and then didn't listen to a word he said and just pushed it off to the side.

The NDP, in some of their acknowledgements, have talked about what they think, and it's just not reality. They think they can build a brand new one plus keep all the other ones. It's myopia that we hear from this party every day; they think everything can just keep going. Have they looked at all at the debt and the deficit that we have in our province, that they supported with their budget votes? They continue to think, "We'll just go back to the taxpayer and keep lending and borrowing and asking for more tax money." This is one more example of how out of touch they are with the average people of Ontario, that they think they can have everything. It's myopia by the NDP. We have been there once before, Speaker. For the sake of the people sitting in front of you, I hope we never go there again.

We're debating today the triplication versus optimization of health services in the Niagara region. Again I go back—they think you can just keep everything. Just triple everything. Don't worry about who is going to pay for it. Don't worry that we've put those young people in debt for the next 50 years of their life.

According to published reports and studies, the way to move forward and optimize services for the residents of Niagara region, the patients that will actually receive the services, is to consolidate existing hospitals in Niagara into a new Niagara south hospital, as this will provide better services for patients, families and visitors to that region.

More importantly, according to the report to Minister Matthews from Dr. Kevin Smith, who heard "the wise and thoughtful advice" of thousands of individuals, it doesn't make financial or medical sense to build a new south Niagara hospital and try to keep the existing sites open. We just do not have the ability to be all things to

all people. Sometimes you have to come in and make strategic decisions. You have to actually think this through and make decisions that are going to benefit the most with the resources that we have today. This seems to be the direction we're going in. I hope the Liberals will be able to support this and that the NDP actually can step back and look at reality and say, "You know what? This makes sense."

A new Niagara south hospital should be built at the Lyons Creek location in Niagara Falls—that's what the study said—along with two additional urgent care facilities, to replace the Douglas Memorial Hospital, the Greater Niagara General Hospital, the Port Colborne General Hospital and the Welland Hospital.

This move is expected to save an estimated somewhere around \$800 million. That's almost a billion dollars. If we add the wasted Oakville and Mississauga gas plants, that would be \$2 billion that would get us back on track to our financial—

Mr. Todd Smith: Three hospitals.

Mr. Bill Walker: Three hospitals. Perhaps the Markdale hospital, which I'm going to talk about in a few minutes—much cheaper.

The other thing is, these things could be used to bring more specialists and nurses, the front-line care, the people that actually provide the care, to those people out there listening who are paying the freight.

More importantly, Dr. Smith also warned us that the status quo was unquestionably unsustainable. So if the status quo is unquestionably unsustainable, from their expert, how can the NDP ever support that we build a new one plus keep all of those remaining sites? That just shows how out to lunch they are.

To the Liberal and NDP members, I ask you, why are you delaying? Why can't we move forward and get this thing built to benefit the people who are paying the freight? This government has for the last 14 months sat on, elbowed aside or ripped up Dr. Smith's recommendations. It's no friend of the health care system when you sit there idly doing nothing. Somebody has to make some decisions and move forward. They've dragged their feet.

I applaud again our leader, Tim Hudak, for pushing the Libs to take some action on this file. In my riding, the great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, I'm hearing very similar things. Just like they're neglecting the Niagara region, they have neglected the small community of Markdale in my riding for 10 long years. Back in 2003, after they were elected to govern, the Liberals promised the residents in Markdale and area they would get a new build to replace their dilapidated hospital. They challenged the community to raise \$13 million. In a small, rural area, the people there stepped up and answered that call within a year. That money has been sitting in the bank doing nothing but earning some interest for 13 years. It's reprehensible that they would even be talking about this and not coming forward with their commitment. As of today, that site remains a vacant lot. Can you imagine? You've challenged someone, they came up, they've acknowledged the site needs to have

something done to it, and yet it sits there as a vacant lot. The community funds are still in the bank; the community is frustrated. The community needs to see some action on this file. Enough platitudes of, “We’re talking,” and “We’re revisiting,” and “We’re going to think of new models.” They need to come forward.

How times have changed. In days gone by, Liberal members, such as the esteemed member from St. Catharines—he used to rail against governments who ignored good advice. He called it negligence, if my memory serves me, from Hansard. I’d like to quote him from a speech he gave back in 1998, when he demagogued the Harris government for not listening to thousands of residents: “Their view should be respected because their advice was good.”

I’m just going to waylay a little bit here, but doesn’t this sound a little bit similar to the Green Energy Act? There are people from across this province saying, “Do not put more industrial wind turbines in my backyard. We don’t want them. We don’t need the power. Listen to us at the local level,” and what do they do? They steam-roll and they take more hot air and hot wind. Again, it’s reprehensible how this government treats the people of Ontario.

Let’s look at what’s happening today. This government is not respecting the good advice they’ve received from Niagara Health System supervisor Dr. Kevin Smith and the local leaders. They appointed, they hand-picked, again, just like Don Drummond, their specific person to lead this file. They hand-picked him and said, “We need you to go out and do a comprehensive study and report.” That report has been finished. It has concluded what they should be doing as a government, and yet they say, “Forget that. We don’t want to listen to you.”

It pains me to say that when it comes to rural Ontario, this government holds a dreadful record on hospital infrastructure.

1550

As I said earlier, this government stands behind a decade worth of promises. At the close of this year, 2013, we’re no closer to the build date in Markdale than we were 10 years ago. Empty promises do not provide health care. I ask the Liberal government, will you not honour your commitments? It’s true that they may not have the money to build any more hospitals, and part of that is because their own finance minister, Charles Sousa, in his own constituency, lobbied for the closure of gas plants, wasting over \$1 billion, Mr. Speaker—\$1 billion. How many hospitals, how many cancer surgeries could we do, how many cataracts could we replace with \$1 billion, just on that scandal?

I want to ask here in front of the people of Ontario, and particularly the Liberals, and the NDP who prop them up at every opportunity, will you assure the people of Markdale and the Niagara region that their hospital projects are more important than seat-saver programs?

Interjections.

Mr. Bill Walker: You can’t sit idly by and heckle me without taking acknowledgement that in the first budget

you sat on your hands and propped them up; the second time you stood up and said, “Go for more.” You are hypocrites. You are hypocritical in your talk.

Mr. Speaker, I want—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I apologize for the delay. I ask the member to withdraw his unparliamentary remark.

Mr. Bill Walker: Withdraw, Speaker.

I ask this government and the NDP to stand and speak to the people of Markdale. Will you commit to building the Markdale hospital and will you commit to building the new south Niagara hospital?

Mr. Speaker, we need to ensure that this government is standing up for the people. They want to talk all they want about health care. Do the action; show the people. Instead of wasting money and doing all the the scandals you have, do the right thing: Build that hospital, build the Markdale hospital and make sure the people of Ontario get the health care that they pay for and they deserve.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: As I always like to begin with, it’s a pleasure, a privilege, for me to stand in my place today and to have the opportunity to speak to opposition day motion number 4. After that last theatrical performance, Mr. Speaker, I’m not quite sure exactly where to begin. Perhaps I should start off where my colleague the member from Ottawa Centre, the Minister of Labour, ended.

I think it’s really important to state right up front on the record that our government has made significant investments in the Niagara Health System since we took office in 2003. It’s important to note that funding for the Niagara Health System is up over \$127 million. That’s 62% since 2003. We’ve also invested in a state-of-the-art hospital that provides tremendous service for that region and replaced the existing St. Catharines General site and Ontario Street site. This 375-bed facility offers acute and critical in-patient services, among a host of other services.

I can point out some other facts: that hip replacement wait times are down by 205 days in this region; knee replacement wait times are down by 193 days; and CT wait times are down by 77 days, or 80%. This is as a result of the determined efforts on the part of people on this side of the House, on the part of this government since 2003, because of the exceptional advocacy of individuals like the member from St. Catharines, who has served so ably in this Legislature for quite some time, and the former member from Niagara Falls, who, on a daily, a weekly, a monthly basis, since arriving here, advocated so incredibly well for his particular community.

I can spend an awful lot of time talking about the outstanding record that our government has when it comes to investing in crucial health care infrastructure in the province of Ontario. But I’m witnessing something over these last number of days, and it’s kind of curious for me to watch, as someone who still is a relative new-

comer to this place. I'm witnessing today that we have one opposition leader putting forward a motion dealing with an issue that he claims is of relevance—and admittedly, health care is of great relevance in the community of Niagara Falls. Last week, we had another opposition day motion put forward by the leader of the third party which also referenced stuff that's taking place in the same part of the world. That one referenced Fort Erie. When I listened to the questions that are asked by members of both parties, both leaders in particular, over the last number of weeks, it's interesting that they keep on, as a recurring theme, referencing stuff happening in Niagara Falls, happening in St. Catharines, happening in Fort Erie. Over the last 14 or so months that I've been here, I have not heard the leaders or the caucuses on the other side of this House reference this outstanding part of our province so many times, and so it does kind of beg the question as to whether or not their motives are pure or whether their motives are perhaps political, perhaps fanned by those flames because there is, as we know, an impending by-election in this community, Speaker.

Interjection: That's not leadership.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Exactly. That isn't leadership.

A second ago, I referenced the incredible track record that this government has investing in health care, not just around the province but in the Niagara region specifically, and that does stand in stark contrast to what's taken place when the other two parties—not only when the other two parties were in power but also over these last 10 years.

I think it's really important for the people who are watching at home, particularly those who live in Niagara Falls, who live in Fort Erie, who live in the Niagara region, to remember that while the Ontario Liberal government has been consistently committed to excellence in health care in Niagara Falls and in the Niagara region, the same can't be said, frankly, for the leader of the official opposition. What we are witnessing today is a remarkable change of attitude, a change of stance which I think, from my perspective, can only be explained because of the by-election posturing that we've seen. It was not that long ago that Mr. Hudak himself said that he would not support a new hospital in this area at this particular time.

Again, when I talked earlier, I mentioned that as a government we have increased funding in the Niagara Health System by 62%, and that's the work that we continue to do, we will continue to do, and we are committed to remaining consistent.

But when it comes to the larger issue that's at play here today, when I heard members from both parties standing up and talking about the importance of investing in local communities, investing in their communities—even though the motion deals with Niagara Falls, I heard them up talking about areas like Markdale, a lovely community that I've had the chance to visit, in fact, and a number of the other communities across this province. What's also important to note is that while the people on this side of the House, as was mentioned by the Minister of Labour, people leading on the health care file, like our

Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, like Premier Kathleen Wynne and her predecessor, Premier McGuinty—while there has been consistency on this side of the House for the last nine or 10 years about the importance of investing in crucial, modern health care infrastructure that provides for communities right across the province, notwithstanding where the opposition stands today and what we've heard from them on the record today, I want to make sure that the record is very clear.

Over the last number of months, over the last couple of years, there have been many, many opportunities for members on that side of the House to support investments in local health care in their communities. So for those folks from Niagara Falls who are watching at home and thinking to themselves, “Wow, these folks on that side, be it PCs or be it NDPers, actually have our best interests at heart,” it's important to make sure they understand that there are a number of important hospital projects that were being considered, that are now under construction or completed in a number of ridings across the province. I think it's important to read into the record what members on that side of the House, particularly PC members, did when they had the opportunity to stand up not just for investments and infrastructure broadly, but investments in infrastructure and health care infrastructure in their own ridings, in their own communities.

Speaker, when we think of the Royal Victoria Hospital expansion in the wonderful community of Barrie, the member from Barrie voted against. When I think of the Cambridge hospital redevelopment project in that wonderful community of Cambridge, the member from Cambridge voted against—and the list goes on.

The Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital expansion in the beautiful Ontario community of Burlington: The member from Burlington voted against it. I think of the wonderful community of Halton, not that far away from where we are today. The Milton District Hospital redevelopment: The PC member from Halton voted against it. This list goes on.

Earlier today, in the course of this very debate, the member from Leeds–Grenville stood up to talk about the importance of investing in local community hospitals and local community health care. The member from Leeds–Grenville, with reference to the Brockville Mental Health Centre expansion—he voted against it. This list goes on.

The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke had the opportunity to demonstrate, the opportunity to walk the walk as well as talk the talk. The Renfrew Victoria Hospital dialysis unit expansion, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke voted against it. In Wellington–Halton Hills, the member voted against the Groves Memorial Community Hospital expansion. Speaker, this list goes on. I've actually edited the list. I've cut it down; the list goes on.

Folks from Niagara Falls are watching at home, and they're hoping, and they're pleading. They understand, because of the advocacy of members like the member from St. Catharines and the former member from Niagara Falls, that they are represented by a government here in

this place that has spent nine going on 10 years investing in modern infrastructure, including building dozens of new hospitals around the province of Ontario. They know; they have confidence in this government, the Ontario Liberal government, to keep proceeding, to keep providing for the Niagara Health System.

What they should be really careful about—it's a notion of "buyer beware." What they really need to be careful about is the words on the other side of this House, from both opposition parties—though most of my quotes today were only from members from the PC caucus because the motion is coming from their leader. But what they really need to be careful about is that that is a group over there that likes to talk the talk on every issue, from health care to so many others, but refuses to walk the walk. The evidence is clear. Over the last 10 years, virtually every time, at every opportunity for members in the Ontario PC caucus, including their leader, to stand up for the importance of investing in crucial, local health care infrastructure, they have taken the easy way out. They've refused to do it, and time after time, they voted against expanding health care in their own communities. People watching at home from Niagara and across the rest of the province need to understand: That's their record. This is an exercise in making sure that they—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mr. Hudak has moved opposition day number 4. Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. The member from Nipissing—Nipissing—Pembroke will not do that again.

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

I believe the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1602 to 1612.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Would the members take their seats, please? All members, take your seats, please. The Sergeant-at-Arms was going to chase them.

Mr. Hudak has moved opposition day number 4. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Duguid, Brad
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Flynn, Kevin Daniel

Mangat, Amrit
Mauro, Bill
McDonnell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McMeekin, Ted
McNaughton, Monte
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine

Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Wong, Soo
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.
Bisson, Gilles
Campbell, Sarah
DiNovo, Cheri
Fife, Catherine

Forster, Cindy
Gélinas, France
Mantha, Michael
Marchese, Rosario
Natyshak, Taras

Prue, Michael
Sattler, Peggy
Schein, Jonah
Singh, Jagmeet
Taylor, Monique

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 71; the nays are 15.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made in the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business, such that Mr. Chudleigh assumes ballot item number 72 and Mr. Hudak assumes ballot item number 74.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SCHOOL BOARDS COLLECTIVE BARGAINING ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA NÉGOCIATION COLLECTIVE DANS LES CONSEILS SCOLAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 19, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 122, An Act respecting collective bargaining in Ontario's school system / Projet de loi 122, Loi concernant la négociation collective dans le système scolaire de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to be in the House today to speak on Bill 122, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act. I understand we have spent nine hours and 47 minutes on this. However, I'd like to point out that I've talked to our critic, the member from Cambridge, and got his thoughts on this, and we certainly have some strong concerns on what's actually happening in our education system today.

Mr. Speaker, I know there has been a lot of discussion on this particular bill, but I think what is important is what we as MPPs are hearing about education and what we're hearing from the general public on some of this legislation. Really and truly, the thought of the govern-

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Balkissoon, Bas
Barrett, Toby
Bartolucci, Rick
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bradley, James J.
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chiarelli, Bob
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika

Fraser, John
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Holyday, Douglas C.
Hoskins, Eric
Hudak, Tim
Hunter, Miltzie
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Kwinter, Monte
Leone, Rob
MacCharles, Tracy
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa

Miller, Norm
Milligan, Rob E.
Millroy, John
Munro, Julia
Naqvi, Yasir
Nicholls, Rick
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pettapiece, Randy
Piruzza, Teresa
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Scott, Laurie
Sergio, Mario
Shurman, Peter
Smith, Todd

ment actually being at the table with all of the money that is spent on education and all the collective bargaining units—I think it's likely considered to be a fairly decent idea. I know that's the intent of this. I guess the government would come to the table and it would be—whether or not the school boards would prefer that method or not, I haven't gotten that particular feedback from my riding.

However, I wanted to point out that what we want to see on this side of the House is what we're hearing from the public and what we're hearing in our constituency offices, and that certainly goes back to regulation 274. I don't know if there's a member in this House who doesn't hear continually now about all the young teachers we see graduating from their universities and teachers' colleges. They're moving towards their teaching career, and absolutely—I'm not sure how that works as far as the way they're funded. However, there's just a tremendous number of young teachers who are not getting an opportunity even to get their foot in the door, even for like one hour of time to supply teach. That's what I hear on a regular basis.

Actually, what I'm hearing now, Mr. Speaker, is parents are writing me letters. They're coming to my office; I'm meeting them at functions, even on the weekend. It actually happened a couple of times at parades on the weekend over the Christmas season. I can tell you, I heard clearly that they were kind of upset that they ever sent their kids in to teachers' college, because some of them now have been there for two and a half, three years and have had almost no opportunity to teach at all. So that has been a real problem.

1620

We, on this side of the House—I think I can say that on behalf of our critic, and some of the other folks may have mentioned this as well—would like to see regulation 274 changed so that we can actually make sure that a lot of people get more of an opportunity in this, and that the best teachers are there teaching.

Certainly we get a lot of complaints. I hear it all the time from people, saying, "These people retired, and now they get 50 days of teaching a year. That's taking away the opportunity for young teachers. In a way, it's kind of like double-dipping." We hear that continually. I would be interested, on some of the comments coming back, if anybody is not hearing that, because it's actually growing in my riding. The more we talk about education, the more it brings to light the fact that some of these young men and women can't get any chance at all. Some of them have left the profession. They've gone back to community colleges. They've moved overseas. Some of them have gone to Korea. They're maybe teaching some English courses or something like that in some foreign countries, but they really don't want to be there. They'd rather be in their home province. I think that is something we have to zero in on.

I do want to say, while I've got an opportunity, Mr. Speaker—and I hope I'm not too far off the topic here, but in my role as critic for skilled trades and apprenticeship reform I've had a lot of really, really good com-

munications with a lot of school boards around the province: some directors of education, people who are really interested in how we're working with young people as far as working them into the trades as well. Almost everyone thinks that when we're changing legislation and we're here debating it—I'm getting a lot of feedback that we should be changing how the curriculum deals with getting young people into skilled trades and making sure that they get an opportunity to be educated early on that.

Last year, I had an opportunity in Regent Park Public School in Orillia. They asked me to go to a career day, and they asked me to go as an MPP to talk to the kids. It was a whole afternoon. For every hour, you were able to talk to a separate group of kids from grades 5 to 8 for up to an hour, and you would circulate with a different class every hour. I told them, of course, about politics, what it was like to be down here at Queen's Park and how the system worked. There were some kids interested in that, of course, the same as how there are these young people who are pages here in the Legislature today interested in that. However, when I told them about my background in the trades—I'd been a plumbing contractor and worked in the mechanical trades—I actually made a special attempt to talk about that because I wanted to make sure that the young people knew that there were real opportunities beyond high school if they made sure they went into the skilled trades and took training in that area.

Many other jurisdictions in the world do that—some of the European jurisdictions—where they actually try to pinpoint some of the abilities that young men and women may have in very early years in education. I think we've got to do that, Mr. Speaker. I'm hearing it over and over again. I hear it from my stakeholders that work with me in apprenticeship reform. I think if there's one area that any government can make a major improvement on, it's making sure that we actually start to funnel kids to a certain area if they show that expertise in the early years.

What that costs, I don't know. I know we've taken most of the shops out of most of the schools, but so many people are so—they're not academically inclined, but they're inclined to work with their hands and they really get it, as far as the trades; they're able to work in all the different trades. I think it's a real opportunity for government, no matter who's in power, to actually take those steps to make sure that we can do more in that area.

One small step—but it has already proved to be quite positive—is the fact that we have the double-credit system in some of our community colleges with certain high schools. Kids who are in high school or secondary school actually get a chance to take courses at a community college. They have already proven with that that a lot of those kids will go on and take technical programs or different skilled trades areas at some of the applied arts colleges, and I think it's really important that we do that.

We're looking at the whole education system today, looking at how many people need jobs who are qualified to be, say, in the teaching profession, and yet we've got

thousands of job opportunities coming down the road in the skilled trades area in the province of Ontario. I'm not sure what the College of Trades is doing on that; I don't think they're doing anything as far as lobbying the school boards or the Ministry of Education on how you better educate people to look at a future in the trades, but I think that's one area.

I know I'm right off topic as far as Bill 122, but the reality is that in this bill we're talking about what we can do best for our young people and what we're hearing out there. So I wanted to bring that to the House today and basically say that, in my tours around the province, what I'm hearing is not a lot about collective agreements. I'm hearing a lot about young men and women getting an opportunity to work in a classroom, and what are we doing for young people in our education system that's getting them more involved in the skilled trades?

With that, I'd like to say that one school in particular, under the Simcoe County District School Board—I think it's the Bear Creek school, on the west end of Barrie—has done some phenomenal work out there. It's just a matter of getting the right teachers and the right principal in the right frame of mind to do a lot of really interesting projects. After touring that school, I know that some of the schools, in fact, really want to be directed toward the trades and want to basically make that classroom open to everybody and look at all the different options for the future.

My time is up, Mr. Speaker, but I do appreciate the opportunity to say a few words, and I look forward to further debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to respond to some of the comments that were made by the member from Simcoe North. I'm glad he mentioned that he was way off topic, because for the most part he didn't talk about Bill 122 at all. But he did mention some very important issues around skilled trades and the need to accelerate experiential learning opportunities in education in the province of Ontario. We are probably very closely in agreement on those issues.

Bill 122, though, essentially brings some clarity to collective bargaining—much-needed clarity on the roles of school boards, the roles of the employer and the roles of the ministry. Of course, the reason we need that clarity is because Bill 115 was imposed on the education sector—not just teachers; people often talk about teachers, but there were educational assistants and support staff. Everyone who worked in education, last fall, was blindsided by this government's heavy-handed approach to collective bargaining. Of course, they were joined quite nicely by the PC caucus at the time, hand in hand, trying to impose a zero and zero contract on teachers even when zero and zero was actually on the table.

We actually do support the fact that clarity is needed, because in the absence of trust, which the Liberals have instilled within the education sector—and actually the

absence of trust that the Liberals have within their own party—I think it makes a lot of sense. Not common sense—I wouldn't go to the Common Sense Revolution perspective—but I do think laying some ground rules so that school boards, who are the employers, actually have a valid role, so that they can bring the voices of their students and their communities to the table.

So we, of course, will be supporting this, and we look forward to it getting to committee so that we can address some of the gaps that exist right now in the legislation as it's presented.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: Just commenting on my colleague from Simcoe North, who, I guess, talked about something he believes strongly in—that is, the need for more of our students to look at skilled trades as a possible career option—I know there isn't enough emphasis on that, because there are amazing careers in all our skilled trades that our young people should consider.

The tragedy, though, is that if you look at popular television and popular media, they never portray people working in the skilled trades. Every time you turn on the TV, it's someone—I don't know—sitting around in a bar talking. That's what they do for a living? I don't know; I see these shows. They should show real-life situations where people in skilled trades do amazing work and build this province.

1630

I'm glad he made those comments about that, but getting back to the real topic, Bill 122, we've been here debating this for quite a long time. I think what we need to do is get this before a committee to hear from the experts and to hear the people out there in Ontario who want to give their input on this bill. I just hope that we get on with listening to the people because I think that people across this province know how complex education is, given that there are so many thousands—tens of thousands—of teachers who have to work through these complex collective bargaining agreements. This is an attempt at bringing some rationality there. It is not an easy thing to do, and that's why we have to get this to committee and make this bill work the best we can. None of this is easy. It is extremely challenging, but at least this is a step toward bringing some kind of rationality to collective bargaining across this great province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I want to thank the member from Simcoe North, my esteemed colleague Garfield Dunlop, for the outstanding work that he has done with regard to the trades and the College of Trades and what kind of damage that's going to do to the province of Ontario in that particular area of job creation.

As has been mentioned here today, we are certainly baffled by this government at certain times. They've brought forward this piece of legislation, which is a retroactive piece, given the fact that they brought in Bill 115 last fall, which actually circumvented the school

boards' ability to negotiate collective bargaining with the teachers' federations. This is nothing more than to mend those bridges that the Liberal Party has burnt in the hopes that, in the next coming election, they are going to gain the financial benefits of befriending the teachers' federations once again.

Although I think it's very good—and that's what government does; we put in place certain frameworks that we can work with, with our public sectors, in teaching and health care and so on. This falls very short, I feel, of what actually needs to be addressed.

I go to the comments made by my esteemed colleague Mr. Dunlop when it comes to actually addressing key issues in the education system like regulation 274, which I'll talk about a little later on when I address Bill 122.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for—help me.

Mr. Michael Prue: Beaches—East York.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Beaches—East York. Thank you very much.

Mr. Michael Prue: It is a privilege and a pleasure to stand up and comment on the speech made by my colleague the member from Simcoe North. I listened, as I always do, in rapt attention, trying to figure out whether or not he was actually talking to the bill. He did make a number of very good points about the trades and about apprenticeships and about how schools should be teaching them. But then again, I had to wonder because this bill has very little or nothing to do with that. This bill has everything to do with how collective bargains are going to be negotiated in the future.

As I sat there and listened and listened as the 10 minutes went, I figured that maybe this was a windup to maybe having a few bells rung. But I was surprised—and pleasantly surprised—when that did not happen today, because it happened the last time for about five hours. So I guess there really was some desire on his part to say something about education.

I think, though, we need to hear a little bit more about the collective bargaining process, and I am heartened that his colleague, who is going to speak, I guess, next or pretty soon to next, is more in tune with what the Conservatives have to say about the collective bargaining process and whether in fact this bill will help or hinder that process. We do know that the two were joined at the hip around Bill 115 there for a while, both thinking that this was the way collective bargaining should take place in the education sector, but there seems to be a slight parting of the ways: the Liberals, obviously having learned the lesson, and the Conservatives, about not to learn the lesson—and tell us how they're going to proceed. But I thank the member from Simcoe North for his edification.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. I return to the member for Simcoe North for his response.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I want to thank the member for Kitchener—Waterloo and the members from Eglinton—Lawrence, Northumberland—Quite West and Beaches—East York for their responses.

What I was trying to get at—I know we've talked about the bill for close to 10 hours. However, what I was trying to do in my 10 minutes, Mr. Speaker—and I appreciate the time you give me—is, I don't hear a lot about the collective bargaining unit in my riding. That's what I was trying to get across. I was trying to get across to the House what I hear in the riding when I'm at different events. Very few people ask me about how collective bargaining units are done by the Ontario government and the school boards. I understand that it goes back to Bill 115 and they're trying to clean up some of what they consider to be the mistakes of Bill 115.

However, I just want to point out again, what I hear is that young teachers are not getting an opportunity to teach. I hear that all the time. Many have gone. After teachers' college, after two or three years, they've not even taken the time to find anything, so they've gone off to other provinces or other countries or they've just found some other kind of job. I think that's what I hear, and I wanted to point that out.

Of course I hear, over and over again, about our students, which is the priority. Our students are the number one priority. What are we doing for those students to make sure that they're best trained for the 21st century?

What I'm hearing is that—you know what?—there is not nearly enough emphasis put on skilled trades in our elementary and secondary systems. I think there's an opportunity there for the Minister of Education—she's here today—and she must have people saying this to her all the time, this particular issue, because I can tell you that I hear it, in the few stops that I've made, that people want to know why there's not more emphasis put on directing people or funnelling some young people into areas where they might be best suited to help the workforce more. That's in the skilled trades area. We all know the demographics.

Although my time is up, I do appreciate the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It's always a pleasure to rise in this hallowed chamber and debate, in a democratic fashion, many of the bills that are brought forward. Today in particular, we have Bill 122, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act.

Mr. Speaker, you have to ask yourself why—as a government or as opposition or third party—we bring forward legislation. Usually, it is to address legislation that's outdated or we upgrade legislation that has been passed previously that doesn't necessarily address the concerns presently today.

This is one of the problems with Bill 122. It was created out of the fact that this Liberal government, over a year ago, brought forward Bill 115. We are all well aware of what Bill 115 did here in the Legislature and out in the general public in our education field. It brought much tension and much disagreement. One of the things that I resoundingly heard from a good number of trustees and board members was the fact that this Liberal

government circumvented the negotiation process and went strictly to dealing with the unions themselves—the federations.

This piece of legislation that has been brought forward does put a framework in place that I think there is a chance that we could probably support. We would, however, like to see some adjustments to the bill brought in. Of course, we've proposed a sunset clause that would actually revisit this bill a year or so after negotiations have been brought forward, just to make sure that we get it right, because it's a waste of taxpayers' money if we keep bringing forward legislation that is actually going to have a detrimental impact on not only our education sector, but health care sector as well.

1640

What we have here is a government that, as I said, circumvented the negotiation process. We have also seen this pattern develop with the Green Energy Act and the fact that this government has said that they would like to negotiate or sit down and listen and discuss with municipalities about implementing further green energy projects. However, we haven't seen much of this of late. The government says one thing and turns around and does another. So I ask you, Mr. Speaker, through you to the Liberal government, why should we trust you when you bring forward pieces of legislation that you insist are going to be beneficial to the province of Ontario?

We've seen in the last week hundreds of jobs lost here in the province of Ontario because of ill-advised policies brought forward by this government. I would like to point out, Mr. Speaker, as I alluded to in my two-minute hit to the member from Simcoe North, that I am also hearing from many parents and graduates of the bachelor of education program in my riding—their sons and daughters who are now straddled with a lot of accumulated debt. You're looking at at least four years of post-secondary education to get a degree to go into the field of education.

One of the things that I found disturbing is that this Liberal government's solution to a lot of problems that they face is they kick the can down the road. You may have heard that saying before. They don't want to make the tough decisions or ruffle any feathers. Well, sometimes you have to ruffle feathers to get things done. You have to be someone who is willing to stand up and put into action the words that you say. We don't see that. What they've done with the students coming out of the bachelor of education program is they've said, "Well, we'll extend it another year." So they'll make it, instead of a one-year program, a two-year program.

Let's ask ourselves: What does that actually do? Is that actually going to find my son or my daughter or many of my constituents a job in the education field? Not necessarily. In fact, I would argue that all that's going to do is straddle my child with even more debt. Another year of paying tuition, your housing accommodations, your travel expenses. Right now, we're hearing from the universities and the colleges, from the students there, how burdensome these financial woes are for them right

now. So this Liberal government wants to implement yet another year of education so that you can graduate with, instead of a \$35,000 debt, a \$45,000 debt or a \$60,000 debt, and you still can't find employment in the education system.

In fact, this government has said that they are going to address the issue of regulation 274. What have they done? What they've done is they've implemented and they've brought forward Bill 122, which tries to mend the bridges with the federations in the hopes that they can regain the financial support of the federations should there be an election called within the next year or so. This is nothing more than the Liberal Party trying to gain financial favour and befriending the federations once again. It does nothing to help employment here in the province of Ontario. It does nothing to create jobs here in the province of Ontario.

When I speak to and listen to principals regarding regulation 274—what this government has essentially done is taken the principals' hands and tied them behind their backs. They are no longer able to hire teachers who are best suited for their school, their school community, teachers who they feel are going to be best suited for implementing curriculum in the schools. What we have here, I would suggest, is a failure to communicate, and that's too bad. It saddens me.

But Bill 122 also brings forward some elements that they want to address, and we'll have to, again, see how that works.

There are other pressing issues in the field of education that I would like to see addressed as well. I think that Lisa MacLeod, our former education critic, and now Dr. Leone, our current education critic, have done a fantastic job of outlining what exactly we would like to see done in the field of education. Would it fall under the canopy or the framework of Bill 122? I think there's room for that. I think that we should have frameworks in place that actually define the roles of teachers, the roles of boards and the roles of what we can do, moving forward collectively, so that we ensure that we have the best-taught students, not just in Canada but in the world. We haven't seen that in the last decade. The reason I'm here today is because of the Liberal policies that have been brought down in the last 10 years.

As Dr. Leone, my esteemed colleague from Cambridge, has pointed out, in the last six years, Ontario students have been falling further and further behind. Mr. Leone, the member from Cambridge, brought this up: How could that possibly be, when the Liberal government insists that our EQAO standards are doing fine? "They're fantastic. The students in Ontario should be proud of their great successes and advancements in the field of education. We're training our young people to be the best, that are going to be the best."

Mr. Speaker, that is not the truth, and I can tell you that first-hand. My wife can tell you that first-hand. My colleagues back home can tell you that first-hand. And it's not because the front-line teachers don't care about students; they do. But I have to say, it's this government

and the policies that they've implemented that have tied the hands of the front-line teachers, that have them frustrated, and our education system is suffering for it. Bill 122 needs some work.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's my pleasure and privilege today to stand and have some comments for the member for Northumberland—Quinte West.

He talked about post-secondary education and how expensive it is, and how students are graduating straddled with debt—I think those were the words that he used. It's absolutely true. I am the critic for post-secondary education, and what I hear a lot about is the cost of post-secondary education.

But the bill we're talking about today is Bill 122, and that's the foundation that we want to create in our education system for students so that when they get to post-secondary education, they are prepared. In that part of it as well, Speaker, we need to make sure that we have the teachers happy with the work that they do, and that the students are receiving the best quality of education, which we know they are. There are such good teachers out there, and they're doing great work. I know they're in it because they love the profession, and they want to make sure that they relay all their education and all their knowledge to our students and feed them the best education they can have, so that when they do go to post-secondary education, they are prepared.

That's why it's important to get this Bill 122 right. We don't want to see division amongst teachers and school boards. The government has proposed that there's going to be a local table where you have the employer and the employees, which is the school board and the teachers, at the table. Hopefully, when they come together, they can work things out. That's where bargaining should be done: at the table, not in the Legislature, like Bill 115.

1650

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: From our side of the House, we've now had 10 hours of debate on Bill 122. Forty-five members have spoken to the bill, and all three parties, as we understand it, are in support of the bill. As the member has said, he's got some amendments that he'd like to see to Bill 122. We would suggest allowing that to happen. Let's get second reading done, move it to committee and then work on some of the suggestions the member may have.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the member from Northumberland—Quinte West. I think the important issues he has raised are ones that require the additional time that has been mentioned, because of the fact that we're probably looking at, if not the most important, certainly a very close second in terms of the manner in which the future of Ontario lies on a go-forward basis.

It's always in the next generation, and so it behooves us that whatever steps we are taking, or whatever ideas we're putting forward, do have the full benefit of our comments, because the future hangs on how we go forward. I think this bill sets a precedent and is therefore something we need to have thorough time on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Just for the record, I want to point out that the government has extended this debate, and yet they keep getting up and saying, "That's enough debate." So it feels very much like games. Actually, that's really what it felt like for the front-line people in education in September 2012, when a little house of cards was going on here at Queen's Park, and all of a sudden the Liberals were these tough people against unions and brought in Bill 115 and held hands with the PC caucus and imposed a two-year contract of zero and zero, even though zero and zero was already on the table.

I just want to point out that New Democrats are happy to see this piece of legislation go to committee, because there are some big issues with it, even though we acknowledge that clarity for school boards, employees and the ministry is necessary.

One of the things we will be addressing in committee is the provision that allows the employer bargaining agency to be substituted in if, in the minister's opinion, the employer bargaining agency is unable or unwilling to perform its duties. It's basically an opt-out clause if the minister doesn't like the way negotiations are going. They put some language into this piece of legislation that would allow them to bring in a substitute. In my mind, I call this the Laurel Broten clause, because she didn't really like the way things were going last time, and when they went really bad, they went really bad.

Also, there's this other part about good faith with the crown: The employer should co-operate in good faith with the crown. I think that when you have language like that in legislation, "good faith" might mean different things to different people. So we have some concerns with that very subjective language.

We're going to get this to committee, though, regardless of the extended debate. It will get there, and we will work to make it a stronger piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We now go back to the member for Northumberland—Quinte West for his reply.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I just want to thank the members from London—Fanshawe, Thunder Bay—Atikokan, of course my esteemed colleague from York Simcoe, and Kitchener—Waterloo for their comments.

I can appreciate how some might be a little frustrated that this bill hasn't been sent to committee already. But, at the same time, I felt passionately enough that I would like to address this bill, and I hadn't had the opportunity yet. I think it's the democratic process, and it's our right to do so. I appreciate what the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan pointed out, but I also appreciate that he loves the fact that we live in a democracy, and we're allowed to have that opportunity.

There are definitely going to be amendments made to this bill when it goes to committee, and that's going to be great. We're going to hear from various stakeholders who are also going to bring forward their ideas as to what and how we can make this bill much, much better.

As I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, we are going to be putting forward the sunset clause that would allow government to revisit the framework that's being proposed and brought back into place, just to make sure that we do get it right. I can't emphasize this enough, because many times I've seen bills move forward and go to committee and come out of committee that have been passed that I think because—the member from Kitchener–Waterloo pays attention to language and words, and the language and wording in those bills are inadequate, and we know that we're going to have to revisit this at a further date.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to have a few minutes in which to discuss some of the implications around Bill 122.

First of all, the basis of this is formalizing a provincial role in the bargaining process. Historically, unions would have negotiations going on with their corresponding board, and if the negotiations reached a certain impasse or a certain point in time, then the federation was always in the position to call for a vote, which meant that the provincial negotiators actually came in and took part directly with the negotiations between them and a particular board.

In essence, the unions have had provincial bargaining for many, many years. They just did it on an individual basis. Of course, this allowed for negotiations to include certain benefits in one part of the province that were not in another part of the province, and very often, as time passed, those particular benefits would then find their way over in later bargaining between a different board and its teachers. So, in fact, for some time the provincial oversight by the negotiators for the unions has always been there. The board is not in the same position, and so now we have the province in that role where it is now sitting at the table. I think it's important to understand sort of the way in which this has morphed from local communities with local leadership making decisions for the locality.

This is a process bill. It deals with this particular process and modernizing—I think most people would agree—the process. But I think that, for many of us, we would like more. We want more than a process bill. This is a ministry that has a \$21-billion cost, \$21 billion per year for the Ministry of Education. It's interesting to note that, since 2003, there has been an increase of that budget by \$8 billion more, with 250,000 fewer students. So if people are expecting a results bill, this is not the right one to be looking at.

It's a bit disconcerting, again, because if you look at international test results, they indicate that in fact Ontario is in a decline in student achievement when compared to other jurisdictions. When I listen to the Minister of Eco-

nomics Development and the Minister of Finance talking about the innovation that's just around the corner, it makes me a little nervous because I think that's dependent on having those kinds of test scores that place us in that international league.

1700

In fact, the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario has recognized that there's a gap between the expectations of those leaving secondary school and their arrival in post-secondary education. That's a huge issue. Universities have commented on students not being well prepared for post-secondary admission. So there's a lot of work to do in following up on that.

As I say, it's a process bill, not a results bill, and I think that when you look at things like regulation 274, it's really unfortunate that what we are looking at here is something that should be the power of the principal. In fact, I think hiring should be the principal's prerogative. In my experience, people purposely looked for a variety of qualified staff. They looked for a variety—a panoply, if you like—of talent, of interest, of experiences, of teaching style, of age or ethnicity. I think that it's designed in a way that they can expose students to the fullest possible range.

Why? Because teachers are role models. They are mentors. Different students learn differently. Different teachers have different teaching styles. These are all things that should be taken into account. The notion that it should be based on one criterion, that of seniority, simply flies in the face of the whole idea of a principal being able to put a staff together that will reflect the best interests of his students.

It's also something that allows him to have what I refer to as the mild eccentricities of individuals. I think of one particular case where I know that that's how some people would have described this particular teacher. One of the things that struck me was that she inspired kids who would never have stayed in school without her, and it's those kinds of opportunities that I feel are overlooked by taking such a narrow approach in this regulation.

I think back on the kids who would have been influenced by this particular teacher. Then there were the kids who were influenced by a phys ed teacher, and they would stay in school for the football season, but then they got hooked a bit and they would stay for the rest of the year. Those are the kinds of people we want teaching our children. Those are the kinds of people we want representing us, and age has nothing to do with that—and I guess I mean that seniority has nothing to do with that.

I recall a colleague of mine who was a World War II veteran, and the stories that she could tell students and the experience that she brought to the teaching experience—she probably would have her job on the basis of seniority, but that's not the point. The point is what she had to offer to students. I think that in every school, everyone should be able to see themselves as being part of that puzzle, of fitting into that jigsaw puzzle to make the complete picture, in order to be able to inspire young people to take whatever direction in their own personal

lives they can find so that they can move forward and be successful.

Teachers have a unique opportunity, and to be able to provide that kind of leadership in the community is the ultimate of the principal—as I say, a principal's prerogative. He's the one who should be putting those pieces together in such a way that his students' needs will be best addressed. There are many examples of teachers who have provided that kind of leadership, but it's always on the basis that some people are going to thrive on one person's teaching style or leadership and other kids are going to learn better from someone else. You can't make it regulated on the issue of seniority. Ontario students deserve better. If we want that innovation and those scores, we have to do the very best, and the very best is hiring the most suitable. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: It's a pleasure to comment on my colleague the member from York-Simcoe's speech, and I listened to it again. It's not so much that she was talking about the bill; she was talking about the influence of teachers. I think very often we are forgetting, even within the confines of this bill, which is the collective bargaining principle and how the teachers collectively bargain so that they can get proper wages and working conditions and health benefits and all the things that come from that—you still have to remember—I listened to the member from York-Simcoe talking. You still have to remember that these teachers are often very incredible people. She talked about teachers who have sometimes influenced the students simply because of their love of football, sometimes because of their love of learning and sometimes because of turning a kid around who is thinking that school is not for him or her. Those are the teachers that we need to have in the system, but part of the way that we keep them in the system is by a whole system of collective bargaining. They have to feel secure within the job. They have to feel secure that their seniority matters. They have to feel secure in the job, that the amount of money they're being paid is commensurate with the work that they do and with the education and the qualifications that they have.

The collective bargaining process is that sort of great leveller, where the teachers come together once every couple of years and sit down on an equal footing with their bosses, whether those bosses be here in the Legislature or the school boards across Ontario, and say what is a fair process for them, for the students that they teach, for the education system and indeed for the government of Ontario. So I thank the member from York-Simcoe for her contribution.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to respond to the comments from the member from—I have to find it.

Mrs. Julia Munro: York-Simcoe.

Hon. Liz Sandals: York-Simcoe; thank you.

There were a number of comments about various educational issues, but I think somebody made the

comment earlier that they hadn't heard people in their constituency talking about collective bargaining. I would like to say thank you. That's a bit of a compliment. The reason they're not talking about collective bargaining is because at the moment we're not doing it and life is calm. But there is some urgency here because all the collective agreements in the province will expire in August 2014. I think, if we want to keep constituents not talking about collective bargaining, we need to find a better way to do it than what unfolded last time. We admit that.

What we're proposing here is a way of doing collective bargaining a bit differently that has general agreement between the people who are going to be doing the collective bargaining. The point being here, we need to get on with passing this legislation so we can do collective bargaining differently. What that means is that we need to get this bill to second reading vote. We've had over 10 hours of debate. Yes, the government did ask to have the debate carry on when we reached six and a half hours, but I need to explain to the viewers that that's because we did not have all-party agreement on actually having that second reading vote. So if everybody would agree on having the second reading vote, we would be delighted to stop debate instantly. But as long as people keep getting up and saying, "Well, we want to talk some more," more talking will happen. I would encourage us all to agree on having the second reading vote and get on with it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Well, I want to get up and talk some more. I hope that's okay. I don't think I'm breaking any guidelines or rules here. That's why we're here.

1710

I very much enjoy the presentations from the PC member for York-Simcoe. The member is also a member of OSSTF. Her presentation followed the presentation by the PC member from Northumberland-Quinte West, who is a former member of OSSTF. I'm a PC member; I'm a former member of OSSTF. I'm sure there are lots of former high school teachers on the other side as well.

I think I can speak for these two members, as former high school teachers: We take education very seriously. I say that in the context that I certainly found teaching high school was a lot of fun. I really enjoyed it. I really enjoyed the kids; I enjoyed the students. I taught grade 9 through to grade 12—large classes. I was in the tech wing. I taught agriculture and environmental science.

It's too bad, when we stand up to speak, that we don't talk more about the students and the kids. I know the Minister of Education just stood up to speak. I don't know whether she mentioned "student" or "pupil" at all. I know that someone did a count. I think she mentioned students maybe four times in her opening speech, and I emphasize only—only four times.

That's the nature of this legislation, and it seems to be the nature of the school system we have now. It was a profession when I taught. It seems to be dominated by

organized labour, and when we talk about education in this House, we seem to spend all our time talking about labour relations and collective agreements and collective bargaining. I think that's a little sad.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I certainly don't mind getting up and talking about public education, but I do think, though, it is incumbent on us to actually talk to the legislation that's before us. For the most part, people have been talking about regulation 274, which has to do with seniority and has to do with hiring and has to do with principals. What's before us right now is a piece of legislation that is trying to provide some clarity around the rules of collective bargaining and negotiations, around employers and around the role of the ministry and the role of employees—the employee bargaining agents. That's what we're supposed to be talking about, and yet here we are extending this debate and criticizing aspects of the education system, which in some instances actually should be criticized. I mean, education needs our constant attention. We should be working more collaboratively together to address the emerging needs of the 21st century learning skills that are needed. Yet we are talking about a piece of legislation before us right now that is a response to a time of crisis in the province of Ontario.

What the PC caucus doesn't seem to understand is that collective bargaining does matter. It does matter, because peace and stability in education does matter, and this Bill 122 is essentially a response to a time of crisis: a manufactured crisis, a crisis that was brought upon the people who work in the education system and the students—yes, the students. When you talk about classes, when you talk about education, when you talk about the conditions by which students are learning in our schools and the levels of tension and crisis that were brought about by Bill 115, you are talking about students.

What needs to happen—if people aren't going to continue to talk about actually bringing clarity to the collective bargaining process—is that this piece of legislation needs to get passed so we can fix it when it gets to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I return now to the member for York-Simcoe, who has two minutes to reply.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I appreciate the comments made by the members for Beaches-East York, Haldimand-Norfolk and Kitchener-Waterloo, and the Minister of Education.

In my remarks, I did refer to the bill, and I certainly thought that giving a historical framework made it clearer that, obviously, this is moving forward and modernizing a process. However, the issues that pop up around it are ones, I think, of equal concern. When several speakers referred to collective bargaining, this is the only opportunity that has been provided to be able to raise issues around regulation 274 and the question of seniority. As I understand it, this is in terms of recognizing

priority over hiring. It still recognizes the value of the collective bargaining process.

To those who look at the question of the timing of this debate, I think that, as many have said, there is an opportunity. This is our opportunity to make comments, and it's our prerogative to continue to make them. Democracy is not necessarily the most efficient method, but one that provides people with the freedom and opportunity to make these comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before I ask for further debate, I would remind members that, when we're debating this bill, members should ensure that their remarks come back to the bill. I realize that it's an education debate and there are other issues that members want to bring forward, but really, the remarks need to come back to the subject that is raised in the bill. I would just remind members of that before I ask for further debate.

Further debate?

Mr. Robert Bailey: In that vein, I will try to speak directly to the debate, as the member from Kitchener-Waterloo indicated that we should, and, of course, taking your guidance as well. It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 122 today. There has been quite a lot of discussion on this particular act, and I'm glad that I had the opportunity to hear the positions of all the members of the Legislature.

We have spent a considerable amount of time on this bill this afternoon. The government has prioritized technical issues to do with the education sector in regard to bargaining rights, but if by working our way through this bill we can expect to get to the government's plan to grow the economy and create private sector jobs for Ontario workers a little sooner, then I'm all for it.

Bill 122 applies to all school boards in the province. It implements a two-tier process: local bargaining and central bargaining. The crown will be legislated as a party at the negotiating table, along with school boards and the teachers' unions. The crown will only participate in central bargaining, but not local bargaining.

Bargaining cycles will be established on a two-, three- or four-year basis, and the same cycle will apply to all contracts, which would ensure that all teachers negotiate at the same time. They would legislate a five-day notification period by either party before a strike or lockout action.

These are all very targeted and specific measures, designed to correct a number of complaints that the school boards themselves and teachers' unions voiced with the last negotiations in the province. It's quite obvious that this Liberal government is eager to mend its relationship with the different unions of Ontario.

Rather than listening to the official opposition and working towards achieving an across-the-board wage freeze for all public sector employees, regrettably, this government's actions appear to target Ontario teachers specifically. The parties at the table obviously had a comfort zone, and they chose to go along with the ministry at that time. The school boards were upset, the unions were upset, and eventually, because of a loss of school activ-

ities, parents and teachers were also upset. Of course, we all know what happened since then. Bill 122 is the latest “*mea culpa*” from the new Premier to the teachers.

When we hear about education from our constituents, it’s often coming from parents who have certain concerns about what’s happening in their schools. They want to know that schools are a safe, nurturing place for their children, and they also want to know what their children are learning and if it will prepare them for their lives ahead. While this bill has nothing to do with the actual education agenda, it’s certainly worthy of our discussion, because we’re all aware of the turmoil that happens from a disruption in the regular operation of our education system.

Bill 122 looks to clarify exactly what the Ministry of Education’s role will be in the collective bargaining process. We know that the ministry will be responsible for setting policies and guidelines for school boards, for allocating funding to school boards, using a funding formula for the establishment of the provincial curriculum, for setting requirements for graduation for diplomas and certificates, and creating lists of approved textbooks and other resources to be used by teachers and students in the classroom. Finally, school boards themselves are responsible for deciding how to spend the funds they receive from the province, for things like hiring teachers and other staff, and building and maintenance supplies.

Last year, the government’s total investment in education was \$22 billion. After health care, our education sector represents the biggest investment. That’s why I do believe that bringing some additional structure to the process of negotiating the collective bargaining agreements for the school boards will be a good thing for the province.

I must say, however, I am disappointed with a number of the things that have taken place in the last couple of weeks in regard to the economy and in regard to the H.J. Heinz closure, the announcement in my riding of Imperial Oil, and a number of other things that we think we should get moving on this agenda; move it forward.

Mr. Speaker, I must say that I’m very disappointed with the actions of this government—inactions, actually, of this government—and I must move adjournment of the debate at this time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Bailey has moved the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1721 to 1751.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I’d ask the members to take their seats.

Mr. Bailey has moved the adjournment of the debate. All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing to be counted by the table staff.

All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing so as to be counted by the table staff.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 0; the nays are 31.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion lost.

The member for Sarnia–Lambton still has the floor. I recognize the member for Sarnia–Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Well, before I was so—I was going to say rudely interrupted, but I guess interrupted by myself, I would like to go back to where I left off.

One of the key facts of this bill, Bill 122—

Interjections.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It’s hard to hear for the heckling, Mr. Speaker, but anyway—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Yes. I appreciate that. I have to hear the member for Sarnia–Lambton. He’s just right there, and I can’t hear him, so I would ask the members to come to order.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Speaker. I know this is important—erudite comments, and I want you to be able to hear them.

Where I left off earlier today: This act applies to all the school boards in the province. It would implement a two-tier process, as I understand it: local bargaining and central bargaining. The crown will be legislated as a party at the negotiation table—now, that’s new; that’s a new part to the bill—rather than just school boards versus teachers’ unions.

The crown—

Interjections.

Mr. Mike Colle: I can’t hear the member, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, for the heckling; Mr. Speaker, they can’t hear the member.

The crown is entitled to participate in central bargaining but not local bargaining. The bargaining cycles will be established on a two-, three- or four-year basis, and this same cycle will apply to all contracts, which would ensure that all teachers negotiate at the same time. A five-day notification by either party before a strike or lockout action would be called for.

We also think that formalizing the government’s role as the employer in negotiations makes sense, because the government, representing the taxpayer, is actually footing the bill at the end of the day. This bill is mainly about setting a negotiating process, and it’s not about improving education at the end of the day. I’ve heard most of the speakers who rose to speak today, from all sides of the House, especially the third party and our party, talk about how they would like to see improvements in education. This bill wouldn’t do that.

Nobody yet knows if this will be a good process. Time will tell. It’s hard to predict whether it will even be successful. There should be, in our opinion, a sunset clause so that this legislation could be reviewed after the next round of bargaining. I think that’s something that, when the bill goes to committee, we probably will move.

This is a highly technical bill, as many people elaborated and commented on earlier. It entirely involves

labour relations. Through the process that ended in Bill 115, the government of the day destroyed their relations with the unions and the school boards. They basically ignored the school boards.

Our solution then, and it continues today, was that a broader public service sector wage freeze applying to all employee groups was a more appropriate method, but the government didn't choose to move in that way. Included amongst our priorities are amendments to regulation 274, which defines a teacher's duty to reflect what they actually do in a day, and wage restraints are not covered by this bill.

We asked the government to clear the decks so we could talk about the economy, and this is another bill that, in our opinion, does not do this.

Stakeholder relations and reaction to this bill has been to wait and see—not a no, and not a yes. Since this bill does little more than set a process for bargaining, some of those hot-button issues we would like to discuss are left out. They would either have to be negotiated or introduced in different legislation.

Mr. Speaker, some of the policies that we are creating in this Legislature—not only do we have more than two million students—our kids, at the end of the day; my grandchildren and yours—in the system, but we have more than 100,000 people who are directly employed in this sector. So it's a very big issue that we have to face in terms of the growing demands of our elementary and secondary schools.

In addition, the ministry obviously has a role in this system. They are also the funder of how we pay for this system. More than \$20 billion, as I have previously noted, is being spent on our education system today. That number is more than \$8.5 billion more than occurred in

2003, when this government was first elected. So spending is up significantly in this sector, and student enrolment is down.

The question we're going to talk about and explore a little bit more is whether we have in fact received a bang for our buck, whether that increased investment has led to what I think all parents want—I know we do, for my grandchildren and, I'm sure, for everyone else in this room—which is, what is improving the quality of education for our students and our kids? I think the jury's still out on that.

I know that this government likes to talk about gains in the system, but I'm going to spend some time that I have left, my remaining time, talking about some of the maybe myths about the gains that they have currently employed.

There are 72 school boards in the province of Ontario: 31 English, 29 English Catholic, four French public and eight French Catholic. There are also several school authorities that oversee schools in hospitals and treatment centres and remote regions of the province; that's something that I didn't know. There's a vast array of folks who are also involved in education today, not just the students and the teachers, but also from the employer side in our school boards.

Am I done?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Done for the day. Thank you very much.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being close to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1758.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Government
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Second Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 26 November 2013

Mardi 26 novembre 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 26 November 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 26 novembre 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SCHOOL BOARDS COLLECTIVE BARGAINING ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA NÉGOCIATION COLLECTIVE DANS LES CONSEILS SCOLAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 25, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 122, An Act respecting collective bargaining in Ontario's school system / Projet de loi 122, Loi concernant la négociation collective dans le système scolaire de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm honoured to rise this morning, on behalf of the residents of Dufferin-Caledon, to discuss the bill before us. This morning we'll be debating Bill 122, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act.

This bill was introduced last month by the Minister of Education and deals with the collective bargaining process in the education sector. In essence, what Bill 122 sets out to do is formalize the collective bargaining process in a way that gives the provincial government a direct role in collective bargaining rounds.

What we're not doing this morning, which I wish we were, is discussing jobs and the economy, but I suppose I shouldn't be surprised.

After all, the provincial government does foot the cost of the education sector, an investment which exceeds \$20 billion, so, certainly, it would make sense for the provincial government to have a formal say in the collective bargaining process.

For the sake of perspective, however, I think it is helpful to consider how the current government has been approaching the collective bargaining process thus far. Previously, during the 2005 and 2008 rounds of collective bargaining in the education sector, the provincial government established a voluntary framework, in discussions with school boards and teacher federations. Under this model, you basically had the provincial government set the tone, set the goals, for negotiating, and then individual boards negotiated with their local

union chapters. This, of course, changed in the latest round of bargaining, and in that case, we saw the provincial government attempt to negotiate a memorandum of understanding directly with the unions. Ultimately, we know how that process ended up, and it wasn't great.

So from a process perspective, Bill 122 may be onto something. I say this because Bill 122 is rooted in the concept that the provincial government ought to have a recognized role in the negotiation of collective agreements in the education sector. That being said, I do have some concerns with the new structure being proposed under Bill 122.

What Bill 122 proposes to do is to create a two-tier collective bargaining process in the education sector, with legally defined roles for the province, trustees, associations and unions. The collective bargaining process will effectively be divided into central and local issues, with negotiation over central issues happening with the provincial government involved, and negotiation over local issues happening at the local level with local school boards.

Central issues are defined as issues with a province-wide impact or those that could result in a significant impact on the implementation of government policy. A final qualifier for a central issue is if it could result in a significant cost for one or more school boards. Issues of this nature would be discussed at the central negotiating table, where the provincial government and school board representatives would be on one side and teacher federations or unions on the other.

All other issues would continue to be bargained by local school boards with local employee representatives. Any local issues could be negotiated concurrently with the central bargaining process.

Finally, when both tiers were finished negotiating, the provisions of a central agreement combined with the locally negotiated provisions would make up the final collective agreement. Also, a central settlement would only be finalized if all three parties—the provincial government, the trustee associations and the unions—all agree to the centrally negotiated terms.

That is the summary of a process Bill 122 aims to implement if it's enacted.

Now, I can't help but comment, Speaker, that while Bill 122 may have some merits, as I've stated, the bottom line is that it is still a relatively modest process bill. What I mean is that we've got some legitimate issues both in the education sector and in other areas across Ontario as well, particularly relating to jobs and the economy, yet this Liberal government seems perpetually stalled in a

mundane process-type of initiative. One only needs to consider the fact that this government has struck 37 panels to study any number of topics before the government. Talk about undue process. It really is quite shocking: 37 panels, 26 ministers, one Premier, and not even a glimmer of a credible jobs plan between all of them.

Regarding the education sector specifically, though, I want to touch on a topic that I am particularly interested in. I think this is a particularly unique topic, because it demonstrates how legislation like Bill 122, while fine enough, really does miss the mark on some of the more important and pressing issues. The issue I'm referring to is the standard practice of retired teachers being able to come back and serve as occasional teachers in their area. This practice in general is problematic, I believe. If a teacher, who may have been teaching for 25 or 30 years, decides to retire, why then are they allowed to both collect their retirement benefits and at the same time teach occasionally? The reason this is so problematic is because the occasional-teacher pool, if I may call it that, is really the primary route for a full-time job for all of our young teaching professionals. I am not by any means saying we should be forcing teachers to retire. But what I am saying is that when a teacher has made the decision to retire, I think they should retire and not go back to occasional teaching. This is because when they do, they, of course, take an occasional-teaching opportunity away from a new teacher.

With relation to Bill 122, this is perhaps an issue that could be negotiated at the central bargaining table under the new system; I'm not entirely sure. But the point is, with thousands of young, aspirational professionals who are graduating every year and eager to get in the classroom and teach our students, they need that experience and they need to do their time and learn their trade, so to speak. But when you have really just one avenue for them to take and it is also open to teachers who have their entire careers behind them, I think there is an equity problem here, particularly, as I mentioned earlier, when you consider that there always seems to be this focus on seniority-based systems like regulation 274, as opposed to merit-based systems in this field. We could very well have an incredible young person who is an amazing teacher, and yet they aren't getting their chance because you have retired teachers filling the occasional-teaching opportunities in their communities. There we have an example of a potential initiative that could lead to more job creation in Ontario for our young people, yet would I ever expect to see such an initiative from this Liberal government? The answer is no, not really.

This government has fumbled the ball so many times, has missed the mark so badly on the economy, that I honestly don't know if expectations could be any lower for the Liberal government, and that is quite sad.

You see, the reason the answer is no, Speaker, is because our leader, Tim Hudak, met with the Premier and proposed a compromise on a number of bills before the Legislature so that we could address the job crisis in

Ontario and the Premier agreed. Our leader said, "Let's clear the decks, let's agree on what we agree on, pass the bills and focus on the economy," and the Premier agreed. Yet here we are two months later: Nothing; no jobs plan, no credible progress on the economy. If anything, things have gotten worse.

0910

You would think, considering the Premier's agreement with my leader, Tim Hudak, that jobs must be the priority, that you'd see a focus on job-creating legislation. You would think that in any area of government, the number one question that the Premier and her ministers would be asking is, "Will this help job creation or hurt job creation?" That's what it's all about, or at least that's what it should be all about. In fact, the only thing the Liberal government points out as their jobs plan is a bill that actually raises taxes for the very types of companies that are closing their doors across Ontario. The lack of awareness is shocking.

So here we are today, debating Bill 122, yet another process-related piece of legislation, in which the Liberals have decided to basically focus on how they can influence future labour agreements. A worthy goal? Sure. But a government's number one priority at a time when thousands of manufacturing jobs are being lost across the province? I think not.

When we are faced with a job crisis of the magnitude that is currently before Ontario, how can the government possibly justify putting job creation on the back burner and focusing on legislation like Bill 122? Bill 122 sets out to tweak the collective bargaining process in the education sector, while what the government could have focused on is the issues of retirees using precious occasional-teaching slots, that I mentioned earlier as an example. Maybe then we could help job creation by helping our young graduates and future teachers get the experience they need so that they can get full-time positions and begin to build a life for themselves.

Ultimately, Bill 122 does seem like a fair initiative, if only to ensure that future governments actually interested in doing something other than having conversations can influence future agreements.

That being said, there are many more pressing issues this government should be focused on, and the first one among them is creating jobs in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to comment on the member from Dufferin-Caledon's 10-minute hit on Bill 122, although I just can't help but reflect on what happened in this place yesterday, when the PC caucus called for unanimous consent to adjourn the debate on 122, and the Liberals, all afternoon, said, "We've had enough debate on 122." Yet, after a half-hour of bells, the Liberals and the PCs came into this place and voted down their own motion and then voted to extend the debate, and so here we are.

It is a process bill; the member from Dufferin-Caledon is absolutely right. But there's definitely a whole new

level of games going on in this House, which actually adds to the cynicism of politics in the province of Ontario, which we all must accept responsibility for.

Bill 122 will provide some clarity around negotiations and collective bargaining going forward. I mean, that's the goal of this piece of legislation. It's needed because there was a huge breach of trust when 115 was imposed on the entire education sector in the fall of 2012. The peace-and-stability piece that I think we're not talking about, which lends itself to the kinds of conversations or initiatives that the member from Dufferin—Caledon wants to put on the front burner, which is an education system which meets the 21st-century needs of students in Ontario—peace and stability matters. Because we lost trust in the collective bargaining process in the fall of 2012, under Bill 115—which both parties participated in—we need 122.

We want to get this to committee. We want to make it better. We want to make it stronger, and we want to bring some clarity to it. So we look forward to that happening.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The Attorney General.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Let me get this straight: The Tories are in favour of this bill; the NDP is in favour of the bill; the government obviously is, because we introduced the bill. Everybody thinks it's a good idea. So why have 50 members spoken on a bill that we all agree to? Why are the opposition filibustering this? Let's get the bill to committee.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have not; I want an opportunity.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Yes, you want an opportunity. Sure, I'm all in favour of free and open democratic debate. But, you know, enough is enough. We all agree on this bill. Let's get it to committee. Let's get the work done. We all agree with this. Stop your filibustering. Let's get down to work for the people of Ontario, which you're not doing right now with your filibustering.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm surprised by the feigned outrage by the Attorney General. A man of his experience should know that democracy is the right to speak. That's what he's trying to deny the members of the Conservative Party: the right to stand up for their constituents.

More importantly, the real issue here this morning should be about the jobs plan. That's what we're so upset about. This government is literally getting away with murder in terms of the lack of attention to the economy and jobs in Ontario, and the member from Dufferin—Caledon said it very, very well.

Everyone here believes education is the greatest gift that our children should have access to, and we certainly would say that for sure.

My wife is a retired teacher, and now she's a school trustee. The reason she's a school trustee is because she couldn't justify supply teaching. We had two daughters-in-law, both of whom had teaching degrees—a master's degree, I think—with no job. So my wife went on and

became a school trustee. She's probably chair of special ed because that's what she was very involved in.

My daughter was a high school teacher as well. She was so frustrated with the system that she's now a teacher in London, England. In fact, she's a department head, I think in science or humanities or something like that.

Hon. John Gerretsen: You should be proud of it.

Mr. John O'Toole: I am, but this system that exists today disappointed her.

Even more importantly, it comes down to, this is still part of the jobs and the economy plan. It's people without jobs and jobs without people. It means the educational system isn't producing the right people with the right skills for the economy we currently have.

Bill 122 is really a governance bill that centralizes negotiation and eliminates the real function of the school boards. I think there's a lot of agreement with that.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Then your wife would be out of a job.

Mr. John O'Toole: My wife would be happy to be out of a job, I'm sure.

Thank you very much for the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I want to maybe provide some more clarity to the member from Kitchener—Waterloo's last comments.

We have the Liberal government saying, "Let's get on with this." We've had about 12 or 13 hours of debate on this issue. We've got the Tories saying, "This is democracy, and we have the right to debate the issue." All the while, they're adjourning debate and ringing bells. Then they get up and vote against their own motion to adjourn debate, and you guys actually vote with them, when you actually could have adjourned debate and ended it yesterday—and all about this process bill that—I don't even know why this bill is here, to tell you the truth.

I don't know why the government couldn't just have sat down and negotiated terms and conditions for central bargaining with the unions. There are other sectors in this province where people sit down across the table from each other. They negotiate a process, and they get on with life, and they move into that central negotiation process.

Democracy is great. We all have the opportunity to stand up here and talk, but if we really want to talk about the issues, I don't know why we continue to adjourn the debate or try to adjourn the House. It certainly isn't in the best interests of any of us to do that.

I have to tell you, last week when they were having that reception here for, I think, the fallen firefighters, it was quite disturbing to have their reception interrupted for the first 30 minutes because we had the people on our right here ringing the bells. I think you need to think about that and what's going on here in the House when you actually move into that process.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Dufferin—Caledon has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: To the Attorney General: It is my job to represent the views of my constituents in Dufferin—

Caledon. I'm proud to stand up and debate this legislation. I'd like to have been talking about jobs and the economy, but this is what has been brought before us; this is what the Liberal House leader has chosen for us to debate this morning, and I will do that proudly.

To the NDP: I don't need any lectures from the NDP about loss of trust. The one and only time they have ever been in government, they ripped up thousands of agreements. It was called the social contract. So please don't tell me about loss of trust. When you guys were in government—you remember the social contract? You were the ones who ripped up thousands and thousands of contracts. You lost the faith of your members; you lost the faith of Ontarians. Don't lecture me about loss of trust, please. You don't have any credibility on the issue.

You want to talk about jobs and economy? Bring forward some legislation that will actually improve the lives of young people in Ontario, instead of these minor-process pieces of legislation that, quite frankly, the only reason we're doing is because you messed it up the last time when you brought forward the education bill. You could have helped that. You could have solved that at the committee level. You didn't do it. You missed it and now we have to go through an entire legislative process. I'm sorry that you messed up, but I'm not going to give you a free ride on it. You want to talk about jobs and the economy? We'd be happy to discuss those pieces of important legislation. Thank you.

0920

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to join the debate here today. We should have healthy debate on these topics—not like the Liberals, who don't seem to want to have to debate, and I guess the third party is not going to join in the debate on Bill 122 today either, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act.

This bill will provide clarity, greater clarity anyway, for the different parties that are involved in collective bargaining in the education sector. It's a good thing that there is an intention to establish this clear framework for collective bargaining in the education sector. We certainly all remember what's gone on in the past year and a half. But by having a two-tier collective bargaining process with legally defined roles for the province, the trustee association—the member from Durham mentioned that his wife is on the trustee association—and unions, students will hopefully not have to suffer through that great debacle like the one that took place in the last rounds of negotiations under Dalton McGuinty.

I want what is best for our children in Ontario. I want to have kids who go to elementary and high schools every day in the province—I want them to feel comfortable that they're getting the best possible education and environment that is conducive to their needs. I want parents across this province to not have to worry about what might happen to the school year when another round of bargaining is under way between the school

boards and unions. I don't want parents to have to worry about whether or not they'll be able to participate in their favourite sport in the fall. You know, in Cobocok, at Ridgewood Public School in my riding of Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, the parents went out and did a Burma Shave on the side of the road, they were so frustrated that the teachers would not bring extracurricular activities back into that school and their children were suffering. I don't blame them for being at the end of their rope in frustration. Good for them for taking that on.

Ontario universities do have the ability to give out some athletic scholarship money, so it would not be fair to limit the athletic abilities of those who have a chance to receive financial assistance due to athletic merit, which starts in public school and goes into high school. I also don't want those who have worked hard in any other extracurricular activity to have to worry about whether or not they will be able to fulfill their wishes of doing so.

Just as important, some students who may require a letter of certification or a signature from a teacher to assist in obtaining that scholarship money might not receive them, as happened in 2012—very devastating for lots of families in that area. There are stories of students who needed to have these types of letters in order to receive financial compensation to ease the burden of the increasing tuition fees across Ontario universities. At that point in 2012, teachers wouldn't produce the letters, once the unions had advised for there to be no extracurricular activities supervised by teachers. It was a tragedy that parents still tell me about every day back in the riding.

This is the road that I don't want our students to go down again. It's not fair to our children. I'm hoping that this legislation will prevent such actions from ever occurring again.

But while this bill does address the importance of establishing the two-tiered system for collective bargaining, it fails to address some of the more important issues that the education system is dealing with currently. I know that it has been spoken about many times in the Legislature. My colleague from Cambridge brought in a motion to amend regulation 274. This regulation must be amended so we can hire the best and brightest that our province has to offer with respect to teachers. Your Liberal government snuck in this regulation back when they introduced Bill 115. Why anyone would think that only hiring based on seniority instead of merit is a good thing is beyond me and beyond many people across Ontario. The parents are talking about that in my riding—and also the young teachers that can't get jobs even though they are incredibly qualified, talented and fit in to the certain schools that they need to be in.

This is a government that has a commitment to restore their relationship with their partners in education and has recently claimed to have taken steps to help 1,500 young people in Ontario find jobs. That's a very interesting number, Madam Speaker, because I have some alarming numbers that prove that this government is not helping our young people get jobs in this province. It also means that our children are missing out on some of the brightest

and most innovative minds that Canada has to offer. The unemployment rate for new teachers was recently pegged at 37%. That's over a third of our recent teachers' college grads that can't find any work in Ontario. Not surprisingly, I think it's about 200 applicants for every position that opens up in my area.

Recent promises have potentially hurt young teachers in some of our biggest school boards. If retiring teachers do not decide to leave after November 30, they are to receive a \$5,000 incentive. Why would this government allow a date so far into the school year? This hurts young teachers in Ontario. Instead of knowing by the time the first term starts in September, young teachers in Ontario have been left wondering if there is a chance they can get hired. This is odd timing, especially since many young teachers need to have the time to develop relationships with students right from the start of the semester. Having a new teacher start midway through a school year disrupts the classroom, and a different teaching style may not be the best for some students.

Recent numbers also indicate that while it's hard for young people to find teaching jobs now, many are being discouraged to apply even to become a teacher. The University of Windsor, for example, over the past decade has seen a 75% decrease in teachers' college applications. It's a significant drop of applications for that university. Our young people are hearing too much about the doom and gloom of trying to find a position in Ontario. So we're educating them and—I don't blame them—they go to other countries. Part of the Liberal jobs plan is we're educating our young people for the US or Korea; there are lots of young teachers I know that go to Korea to teach. You only have a one-in-eight chance of getting a job in Ontario if you're a graduating teacher right now. So of course there's going to be an influx of teachers heading out of the province to either other provinces or other countries. We're failing our students that way.

What has been in the newspapers recently is never getting enough attention, I don't think: math, which is an important subject for our students to excel in and develop interest in. The year 2013 marked the fifth year in a row that our students have showed a decline in math skills. Just 57% of students in 2013 met the provincial standards of the EQAO math testing, down from 63% in 2009. It's an amazingly low number; I don't know how we plan on growing our province if our students are not up to par in math. The education minister is quoted as saying, "I think that the academic background of a lot of our elementary teachers is more in the arts." She goes on to say, "They don't necessarily have an extensive background themselves in math and science." Well, that's probably true, but we need to deal with math so that teachers have the same comfort level with teaching math as they do reading and writing. It's critical for our children and their futures, especially in this technology-advanced world, and for our economy to grow. We're failing our students in math also.

So why is this government focused on a bill for collective bargaining when our children are struggling so

much in the classroom? We have the young people that are technically inclined; we have the young people that could effectively teach math to our children and help develop their minds in a technically inclined way, but again, this government wants to hire teachers based on their seniority, not based on how they might be able to teach math. It's a serious problem. It can't be ignored. We've been fighting for it over here to try and get the best teachers to give the best education to our students in the province of Ontario.

Minister Sandals, the Minister of Education, claims that the proposed bill here is "groundbreaking legislation." Who exactly is this groundbreaking legislation for? Is it the union, the negotiator? What about the actual students and teachers, who do not have much of a say in the bargaining process itself but are the ones who are most affected?

We have had a lot of problems that could be addressed in this Legislature. We want the best for our children, but at what cost? The Liberals are trying to put a collective bargaining process bill quickly through the Legislature, instead of focusing on getting the best teachers possible for our kids. So, frankly, I'm shocked that one of the 37 panels that the government has constructed has been unable to put forward a recommendation to help our students get ahead. It's a government of panels, there's no question. Anyway, I am digressing.

0930

What we need to do, what is best for the students of Ontario in order to benefit all of us—we can't afford to put students in such a position that their academic futures may be in jeopardy. The last time the boards went to negotiate, the government ignored their previous two methods of collective bargaining and instead attempted to negotiate a memorandum of understanding with the unions. Unions were quite upset about Bill 115. They certainly expressed their displeasure with how the government handled the negotiation and inserted themselves into the process.

So we do not want a repeat of what happened back in 2012 under Dalton McGuinty, undermining the trust of teachers across Ontario. We will look forward to continuing—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: In response to some of the comments that were made around Bill 122, I think we all acknowledge that clarity is needed around collective bargaining going forward. There was a breach of trust with regard to Bill 115, that the PCs also participated in.

For the Liberal government to bring forward this piece of legislation with this particular timing indicates that they understand that there's a lack of trust in the education sector—unions, non-unionized, whatever. But they are also putting forward a piece of legislation that ties their hands to some degree.

There is one component that the member has not addressed that is contained within the legislation. There is a provision in 122 as it stands right now that allows the

employer bargaining agency to be substituted if, in the minister's opinion, the employer bargaining agency is unable or unwilling to perform its duties. For us, this leaves a little bit too much room and leniency for the minister. We have some trust issues with regard to the minister going forward. This is exactly what happened with 115 in September 2012: The minister didn't like the way things were going, even though zero and zero was on the table. For political reasons, they pushed and pushed and imposed a contract on the education sector, really negating both rounds of bargaining in the previous sessions and rewriting the negotiations process on a day-by-day basis. We have some serious concerns around this. We will be addressing the leniency as it relates to 122 when it gets to committee, because we think this leaves an open door to a piece of legislation, and quite honestly, that's unacceptable.

If we all care about students in the province of Ontario, peace and stability and an open, transparent process are needed.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Hon. Jeff Leal: It's always a delight to hear my colleague from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

Just to provide a little technical clarification, I guess, at 6.5 hours we can adjourn the debate. It is adjourning the debate for the afternoon; it doesn't enable us to call a vote. When the official opposition moved the adjournment of the debate yesterday and did so, we voted for it because we wanted to stay here and not go home early. In other words, there's no mechanism to end the debate unilaterally. Of course, we've had 12 hours of debate, 52 members, and it will continue.

Madam Speaker, I happen to be the husband of a principal. And by the way, Karan and I had our 19th wedding anniversary yesterday. She was very busy, as a principal at St. Patrick school in Peterborough. When you visit St. Patrick school—it's a great, great school. She has a combination of young, wonderful teachers and veteran teachers, because that's the kind of cohesive team—like the Montreal Canadiens—to move forward. You need to have that kind of team spirit.

Just last Friday, I was at the official opening of the new addition to St. Paul elementary school in beautiful Norwood, Ontario. The diocese bishop, Bishop De Angelis, was there; my federal colleague was there. What a great celebration, to see what's happening in the education system in the province of Ontario: bright-eyed students getting the best learning in the world and getting to where they'll take their jobs on in the future and be a great success story. All sides of the House here should be celebrating the success of education in the province of Ontario. Last Friday, I got to see it first-hand—a wonderful experience.

Collectively, we'll get this bill moved forward. It'll provide the framework for future negotiations. Let's get it moving forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I listened attentively to the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. She brought, I think, some very salient points to the discussion, and representing her riding as well as she does, I think she really should have mentioned more frequently the relationship between education and the economy.

We know that it's a knowledge-based economy. We know that skills and all those things that are occurring—to remind our children how important the educational system is. But this bill does absolutely nothing. This bill, in my view, is a "kiss and make up" for the mess they've made out of the system.

Now, it's not all their fault. This has always been a very sort of fraught-with-conflict system. I can recall that when the NDP were in power, they commissioned the Royal Commission on Learning report called *For the Love of Learning*. I think there were about 135 recommendations from that, many of which had been followed through by the Mike Harris government. In fact, it extended funding to the Catholic boards—equal funding for every student. In fact, he changed the student-focused funding model totally. In fact, who did we put in charge of that? It was their Minister of Education, Dave Cooke.

Now, what they have done here is completely dissolve any legitimacy and authority for the boards. In fact, they're going straight to the union that basically runs it. They're a professional union but, nonetheless, they've got to realize that the economy is related to how many resources are going to be at their disposal. I think that's the unwillingness that I sense. They beat the NDP in that, even though they had the royal commission. They also had more commissions. They were the government that brought in the Sweeney commission, which reduced and cut in half the number of school boards.

This board is now going to go in creating "educational LHINs"—that's what I call them. They're going to be called educational LHINs. There will be four or five panels. Where's the role of the parents and the students in this?

This bill does nothing about improving education; it's about improving relations.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I want to build on the points laid out by my colleague from Kitchener-Waterloo, that not only did the Liberal government breach trust, which causes us to be in a position to have some apprehension about the ministerial discretion which is included in this bill and which gives the minister too broad of a scope—of a power and of a mandate to act his or her whim, to substitute a bargaining unit in terms of the negotiating.

The other problem with this bill that raises some concern is the fact that, while I'm supportive of the idea of formalizing the process and making sure that all the parties involved are recognized as individuals that are a part of this process, the crown or the province, while a formal participant, isn't actually defined as a formal party. The problem with that is that the crown or the province, therefore, is not actually bound by the Ontario Labour

Relations Act and doesn't have that requirement to bargain in good faith.

Now, one of the fundamental aspects of having a strong education system is peace and stability. If we're serious about ensuring that our children have a bright future, we need to make sure that our schools are stable, they're peaceful, and that we respect all the players involved. Without that respect, we can't move forward with a stable school system.

The fact that the crown or the province isn't actually bound by the OLRA to bargain in good faith raises some serious concerns when we already have a situation which is tenuous, and in which we've already seen a breach of trust. Moving forward, we need to eradicate any potential for abuse, and this is one other hole that we need to address. We need to make sure it doesn't exist so that we can really move forward with securing a bright future for the students in our society.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has two minutes to respond.

0940

Ms. Laurie Scott: I appreciate the comments from my colleagues in the third party, Kitchener–Waterloo and Bramalea–Gore–Malton, in respect to the trust and the debacle that occurred in 2012. I don't think that what went on in 2012 did anything for the relationships with the teachers, the students, the parents and, of course, the unions, who were kind of the big club in the whole situation.

The problem with this bill is rightly pointed out by my colleague from Durham. It's a "kiss and make up" bill. I agree; I like that line: It is a "kiss and make up" bill.

They missed the fact about jobs. I spoke a lot about the fact of our math scores going down and how the young teachers who have the high skills are not being hired because of seniority rules that exist. I talked about the amendment that my colleague from Cambridge has brought in for 274, to have that changed—because we are not preparing our children for the future and for the jobs.

The member from Peterborough: We have an area in Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock and Peterborough that has higher-than-average unemployment and huge youth unemployment. I say in good conscience that this bill, for what it is—it's a process bill; it's tweaking a few things—is not really addressing what we on the Progressive Conservative side have been calling for, and that's a real jobs plan out there for our young people. We, as politicians, have to be responsible in setting the stage to create an environment for jobs that helps our young people move forward. I don't think this government really does put children as the focal point of educational discussions in this Legislature. I think they are too busy keeping their union friends happy and at bay, and that is wrong.

Madam Speaker, we're going to support 122; we're going to talk about it a little bit more, though.

I want to just say, happy—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to join the debate this morning on Bill 122, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act.

I had an opportunity last week to visit a couple of high schools in my area, as well. They launched the ACT Foundation program at Centennial Secondary School in Belleville on Friday morning. I had the chance to work with some students on CPR and to make sure that they knew how to work those wonderful defibrillator machines that are now located in all of the high schools, thanks to some injection of cash from the private sector and, of course, our Ontario Trillium Foundation, which is a big supporter of that program as well.

I was at Quinte Secondary School later in the day, talking to Mr. Tetlock's grade 10 civics class about what life is like here at Queen's Park and what a joy it is to represent Prince Edwards–Hastings every day in this Legislature.

On Saturday afternoon, I was over at Mary Ann Sills Park, the beautiful turf park in Belleville, where the Moira senior Trojans—and I brought this up last week during debate—won back-to-back National Capital Bowl championships, with a 26-8 win—with all apologies to my friend from Leeds–Grenville—over the Gananoque Trojans. We knew the Trojans were going to win, going into that game. The Moira Trojans were playing the Gananoque Trojans, but it was Moira that came out on top.

Back to the bill, after that brief update on life at schools in the Quinte region: I can tell you that my wife is a very proud Moira Trojans supporter, because she's a high school teacher at Moira. That's the high school in east-end Belleville that just won its second straight National Capital Bowl championship on Saturday. She's a very good teacher. She worked right through the system. She was the head of the special education department at Moira Secondary School, and then she was the head of guidance for a year. Now she's the current head of the co-op program at Moira Secondary School. There are a lot of great teachers out there, and I know a lot of them give a lot of their time to coach football and run the student council and make sure the yearbook is out every year. There are great teachers teaching music lessons during lunch hours. There are so many out there. This bill that we're debating here does absolutely nothing to make the school experience any better for our students as they go to school.

We've talked about it before, Madam Speaker: In the last 10 years that this government has been in power, we're spending \$8.5 billion more in education for 225,000 fewer students who are in the system. The bulk of the money that they're injecting into the schools isn't to build better schools; the bulk of it isn't to make sure that these sports programs are available or the after-school programs are available. The money that they're injecting into the system is going into the pockets of the union membership. That's just a simple fact. It's not going to buy new textbooks; it's not going to buy new school supplies; it's not going to buy the latest and

greatest technology to put into schools; it's going into salaries.

Why wouldn't it, really? After all, Madam Speaker, when these guys needed to get into power in 2003, they went to the teachers' unions and they said, "Look, help us and we'll help you." That's what happened in the election in 2007 and the election in 2011 as well. But something happened last year, a cataclysmic event in the world of the Liberal Party of Ontario and the teachers' unions. They would like us to forget about that fact because, as our member from Durham just indicated, this is the "kiss and make up" bill. This government brought in Bill 115. That was their bill, and they turned their backs on their friends. I'm telling you, they're trying to kiss and make up right now, but the teachers who I talk to remember exactly whose bill that was. That belonged to the government across the way. They would like everybody to forget that that happened, but they're not forgetting, and with good reason.

You know, the NDP made much ado in October about Bill 74. They called that political favour-trading. But there's no greater example of political favour-trading than what we've seen over the last 10 years between the teachers' unions and the Liberal Party of Ontario. The single largest third-party spender in the last election wasn't EllisDon, not even close. It wasn't a major retailer or a developer or a brewery. Do you know who the biggest third-party spender was in the last election campaign?

Interjection: Who was it?

Mr. Todd Smith: It was the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario. Most of that money went to members on that side of the House and to that party. And what did they do? They stabbed them in the back for political purposes—we're not exactly sure—or maybe, finally, a light bulb went off with Premier McGuinty and the finance minister, Dwight Duncan at the time, and they realized that they actually were digging a humongous hole that this province wasn't going to be able to get out of unless they started to get some of their costs under control. So they brought in Bill 115, and that was the first glimmer of recognition that the government had any inclination at all that they were spending far too much: "We can't afford it any longer. We have to start to get our costs under control in the province." They poured millions of dollars into making sure that their old buddies across the way got re-elected and then, at the first opportunity last September, they brought in Bill 115.

We've been saying for quite some time now that the government needs to bring in some bills that are going to start to invigorate our economy, bring some confidence back into the economy in Ontario. What we've seen over the last four weeks is hundreds and thousands of jobs leaving the province on a weekly basis. The Leamington closure of the Heinz facility after 104 years in operation—and my good friend here from the Leamington area knows exactly the impact that that kind of a closure is having on his community. I hate to say tumbleweeds will be blowing through Leamington, but that's the kind of effect this can have. The government was way too late

in helping them out, and it's the policies of this government that are largely responsible for Heinz closing that facility after 104 years. The red tape that exists in Ontario—and they keep bringing in bills that are increasing red tape even further, like Bill 91, which is going to have a very detrimental effect on food producers and beverage producers in the province of Ontario. I've met with many of them, and they're considering moving out of the province because it's just too inefficient to do business here in Ontario. But let's move on.

Sensing that there's a possible election in the wind, this government has done the following: It has taken money from the taxpayers and it has given it to ETFO to make up for a mix-up that that union made during the last round of negotiations. Now it's establishing a new negotiating regime. We don't know what the effect of this new regime will be just yet. We know that it could lead to as much acrimony as the last one, and certainly the unions seem to be preparing for that. It does nothing to address the quality of our education in our classrooms. It does nothing to ensure an increase in the four-year graduation rate—and I stress the four-year graduation rate because it's important to state how many kids are graduating on time, not just eventually. The one thing that we hear all the time from university professors is that 19-year-old young men who are in university are now behaving more like 17-year-old men because they are not ready when they leave high school. They're not ready for university. We hear that all the time from our university professors. This bill is not dealing with that problem, Madam Speaker.

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It's not dealing with the problem that we've heard from Dr. Rick Miner, who is the former president of Seneca College. I've had meetings with Rick Miner where he has the great presentation called *People Without Jobs, Jobs Without People*. We're not preparing students in the classroom in high school to fill the holes that we're going to have in our employment sector. We need to do a better job of making sure that our high school curriculums are in line with the jobs that are going to be available in Ontario, if there are any jobs left at the end of the day in Ontario.

They're not dealing with one of the biggest complaints that I hear at my constituency office in Belleville and in Picton and up in Bancroft, Madam Speaker, and that is the issue of retired teachers taking jobs on the occasional teaching roll, or the supply list, as it's called, from new graduates from university who are just looking for a foot in the door. I know teachers in my riding, or at least graduates from teachers' college in my riding, who are working bagging groceries at the Metro grocery store, or they're working at the Starbucks, or they're working at Tim Hortons, because they can't get their foot in the door even on the supply list because it's jam-packed full of teachers who have supposedly retired and moved on in their lives. They have a great pension plan; we know that. I look forward to my wife cashing in on her pension plan some day, which she's paying into. But they need to step

out of the way, because one of the biggest issues that I hear from young university graduates is that they can't even get on this list. This bill does nothing to deal with that situation.

There is so much more that this bill could have contained, but at the end of the day, it's exactly what the member from Durham called it. It's the "kiss and make up" bill. And you know what? The teachers who I talk to aren't going to fall for that this time.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's interesting to hear the member from Prince Edward–Hastings say that Bill 122 will have no impact whatsoever on public education, because, fundamentally, I suspect that this is the party that's not interested in being respectful or transparent or accountable to the people who are the front-line workers in the public education system. They made that very clear when they joined the Liberal government with Bill 115.

It's interesting that they call it the "kiss and make up" bill, and perhaps there's some truth to that. There are some trust issues; they're trying to mend some fences. It's an uncomfortable place to be, on that fence. But the PCs are not even interested in forming those positive relationships. For them to say that negotiations don't matter when part of that negotiations process, if those school boards are actually at the table—if school boards that are on the front line, that know their communities best, have a valid place at that table, they can bring those issues of the skilled trades to the negotiations and they can talk about the high needs on special education, because those are huge issues in school boards. School boards are dealing with a whole myriad of issues that don't have anything to do with the neo-liberal centralized agenda that has been imposed on them for the last 10 years.

I know it makes the Liberals uncomfortable when I talk about this, but you can actually see local democracy being undermined with every year that this government has held power. The voices of those trustees who are truly accountable at those school board tables have been ignored for way too long, and they're not going to be ignored anymore. If we get Bill 122 fixed at committee, if we plug those holes that clearly leave a lack of accountability, then it will be a good piece of legislation, and we look forward to making that happen.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Hon. John Milloy: We've had 12 hours of debate. It's time to send this bill to committee.

There have been some mischievous comments made about this. For the record, I just want to say that the only way, particularly in a minority Parliament, this can go to committee is if the Conservatives stop their filibustering and stop the debate. We have no power to end this debate, except listening. All of them make the speeches over and over again. It's an important bill. Let's send it to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I look forward to the opportunity to chat for two minutes about the comments made by our various members.

I was reading the Toronto Star this morning—yes, I do actually read the Toronto Star—and I was quite pleased, actually, to see that they finally understand the grim reality that we are in, in the city of Toronto.

The headline is "Economic Report Paints Grim Picture of Ontario," and it was written by the very talented Martin Regg Cohn. It talks about Roger Martin's Task Force on Competitiveness, Productivity and Economic Progress, and sadly, what we realize is there is no progress. In fact, he calls it a "regress" here. Ontario is "in a stall," not only in our outputs, our exports, but also in our imports. The fact that there is no economic progress in an economic progress report is quite startling. When you see the take-away message that is here, it is: "No point worrying about Ontario's economic stall. Better to be afraid, very afraid." Those are the words of the Toronto Star. We're beyond the point of worrying about what's happening to Ontario; it's now the time to be frightened about what's happening.

We see, according to the Bank of Canada, that our revenue is going to be going down in the next year and the following year, and now that the Liberals have announced their spending spree, a pre-election spending spree, we see the spending going up. Revenue down, spending going up: There is absolutely no opportunity for them to balance the budget. That's the message we need to be sending to the voters.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I just want to talk briefly. The member from Prince Edward–Hastings talked about cashing in on his wife's pension somewhere down the road. Now, this is a party who is against public sector workers and who is against public sector pensions.

Now they're against teachers coming back to work after they retire. But just a couple of months ago, I heard the Tories standing here in the House saying, "We need to increase the retirement age for teachers." You can't have it all ways. You can't say, "Well, I want the teachers to work until they're 60—"

Mr. John Yakabuski: We'll raise the retirement age so they won't have to come back.

Ms. Cindy Forster: "I don't want them to have a public sector pension. I want jobs for young teachers."

Well, you won't have jobs for young teachers if you increase the retirement age from 55 to 60 for teachers. The young teachers will be 30 by the time they actually get into the workforce.

You know what? As far as having teachers work after they retire, with their good pensions that they actually get, they're going to still be able to drive the economy, because they're going to have some money to spend, and that's what drives the economy in our communities.

With respect to the Liberals saying that we've had enough debate on this issue, we agree; we'd like to get this on to committee. But on the other hand, you voted

yesterday to continue the debate, and you voted against the adjournment. We could have adjourned yesterday and had 10 or 15 minutes less of debate on this issue.

I think that's all I really want to say on this issue at the moment.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Prince Edward–Hastings has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Todd Smith: I appreciate the comments from my NDP colleagues from Kitchener–Waterloo and Welland. They're a little grumpy this morning. You can understand why, after the results in the federal election last night, they'd all be a little down and out. It was not a good night for their federal NDP cousins, that's for sure.

I'd like to thank the government House leader as well for his comments—and the fact that he's heckling as well, which is also nice—and my colleague from Nipissing, who enlightened us again.

It's nice to know that the Toronto Star is finally catching on that we are not doing well when it comes to the financial ledger here in Ontario. It's because of back-to-back-to-back multi-billion dollar deficits that this government continues to run, and this is a big part of it—and this bill is actually a big part of it, Bill 122, because, as we've dubbed it, the “kiss and make up” bill, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, comes on the heels of Bill 115, which occurred last summer, and that was a bill that was put forward by the government.

This is just a process bill, as we've heard a number of times here today. It's a way for the government to try and establish a negotiating framework. It's something that probably could have been done behind the scenes, but they brought it out here because they don't have a plan to get our economy on a roll so that we can create jobs.

1000

If I was more of a cynical man—and I know, like the Minister of the Environment, I'm not really a cynical man—I'd say that this was drafted because the government needed a little leverage over one of its biggest fundraisers because those fundraisers are starting to play footsie with the NDP as a result of Bill 115 last summer. That's why we have Bill 122. Let's call a spade a spade. Bill 122 is on the table because they were worried about losing one of their biggest supporters financially to the NDP. It does absolutely nothing to make our education system better. It does nothing to improve the experience for our pages and my two daughters so that they can get a job at the end of the day here in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Harris: I'm pleased to rise for the first time and speak to Bill 122 on behalf of the constituents I represent in Kitchener–Conestoga. I was actually just scanning a letter that my colleague the new critic for education, Rob Leone, sent to the minister, I believe just last week. He goes on to say that, since has been critic, the government has tabled two bills that really don't address the true issues that need to be addressed in our

education system. I think that's unfortunate. However, we will carry on with regard to Bill 122.

During the Bill 115 process, the government ignored their previous two methods for collective bargaining and instead attempted to negotiate MOUs with the unions. The unions obviously were very upset that the government inserted itself in the negotiations, which resulted in labour unrest in the form of strikes and the suspension of extracurricular activities for the remainder of the school year.

In fact, I recall meeting with our chair of the local school board, Linda Fabi, who has now gone on to retirement and to bigger and better things. We wish her well in her later years, I suppose, enjoying herself. But I cannot forget the students that I spoke with during the course of that time last year. The calls started pouring into my constituency office, from not only students but their parents, who just couldn't believe that the unions had ordered their members to stop offering extracurricular activities. Actually, last Friday I watched CTV News, and it showed those teachers who were publicly shamed in one of the publications for going against their union and basically siding with the students. I recall a basketball team that had paid up, in the region of Waterloo, to go to Phoenix in Arizona to play over the Christmas holidays. There was a lot of debate on whether that team would go, forfeiting a lot of the fees and money that those parents had invested in their students. I know that the students by far wanted to get to Phoenix to play in that game. Those two teachers, thankfully, did say that they would support the team and they would go, and we thank them for that. In fact, I did place a call to both of them thanking them, on behalf of the parents and students in my communities for doing what's right, and that's to provide those extracurriculars to those deserving students.

The students, though, just couldn't understand how the unions could order their members to use extracurricular activities as a bargaining chip in a labour dispute without considering the effect that this action would have on the future development of our young people throughout Ontario. In fact, a lot of those students talked about it not just being sports or recreational extracurricular activities; I remember running into a student attending Huron Heights in my riding of Kitchener who said that she attended early-morning prep and after-school prep to bump her marks up to be able to get into college or university the following year. Again, it's not just the recreational or extracurricular activities that were important; it was the prep before and after school that would allow her to get a good post-secondary education and eventually a good job down the road.

However, though, facing the full power of the unions—I have to commend two students, Erica Boer and Taylor Cloutier, both students at Huron Heights, also in Kitchener. They did everything they could to bring back those extracurricular activities. Erica started by sending me a letter outlining her concerns and disappointments with the teachers' job action. She wrote that “extracurricular

activities open doors to college and university and without these activities many kids will lose opportunities for their futures." I totally agree with her. She continued, saying, "We are the future of this province and deserve to have a voice. I personally don't want to stand by and lose the things I love to do. It only takes one person to make a difference." I have to say, I was immensely moved by Erica's letter. She demonstrated leadership and understanding of the political situation and knew the importance of restoring extracurriculars for not only herself, but her classmates and the rest of the students across the province. In fact, I had the opportunity to meet Erica and Taylor to talk about their letter, the effects that the union's job action was having on their high school experience—because down the road at the Catholic school, they weren't going through that difficulty. We talked about Erica, who had just started volleyball. Already, in that limited time, she had developed some strong friendships with her teammates, but in one fell swoop, the unions took that away from Erica, without a moment's notice.

Instead of giving up, though, Erica and Taylor organized their classmates. They had more than 350 students sign a petition calling on the government to restore their extracurricular activities. To assist their efforts, I also sent a letter along with this petition to the Minister of Education. Unfortunately, it didn't get a proper response from the government, but they did manage to raise enough awareness about the issue to make major media in the region, the *Waterloo Record*, pick up the story. So although it wasn't Erica's responsibility, she continued to be an advocate for students across Ontario, dedicating countless hours to restore those activities.

Madam Speaker, it's time to implement real measures that will ensure that students like Erica and Taylor will never have to endure disruptions like this again. Unfortunately, though, Bill 122 specifically doesn't address some of the major problems in our education system, as we have seen with Bill 115. In fact, it doesn't make a plan that will improve test scores and the quality of education to our students, as I outlined in my colleague Rob Leone's letter just recently. It doesn't help build confidence with parents in our education system. It doesn't define the role of a teacher and which duties they are responsible for, even in times of labour unrest—we have to put an end to using extracurricular activities as a bargaining chip—nor does it encourage teachers to be more involved in their schools in the form of extracurricular activities and after-school programs. It doesn't make these types of activities voluntary so that they won't be barred by teachers' unions.

My good friend the member from Cambridge wrote to the Minister of Education last week and in his letter addressed seniority rules for teachers as being a major problem in our education system. Young, enthusiastic teachers and new college graduates often go without teaching simply because of the seniority rules that are in place. This is despite the fact that they are highly qualified, dedicated and have enough experience to provide a good-quality education to our students here in Ontario.

However, Bill 122 does define central and local bargaining. One section, in fact, talks about the role the teachers' federations have at the central negotiating table with corresponding trustee associations. It also includes the role of government in the central bargaining process. Secondly, there is a local bargaining component that will still be maintained between the school board and their federation locals. It's important that this kind of local bargaining remains in place, and obviously, Bill 122 formally institutionalizes that.

However, during the whole Bill 115 debacle, I also heard from many support workers who didn't have a voice during the strike. They were left to obey authorities without any input. Speaker, we must ensure that when we are formally institutionalizing a bargaining process, all the seats at the table are properly filled, of course, with those stakeholders. This is another concern I have with Bill 122.

As a member of the official opposition, I've seen the government create legislation that gives, obviously, great power to the ministries without much review or scrutiny afterwards, an important part of the legislative process. The same goes for Bill 122, which is why we are calling for there to be a sunset clause added within it. When my colleague the member from Cambridge consulted teachers, school boards and trustees about this bill, they were fairly pleased at first glance but had a concern over the power the ministry had. Including a sunset clause would give the opportunity for the partners of education to come before a legislative committee, to consult with the ministry officials about the sections that work in the bill and what should be modified, based on the bargaining process at the time. I think that we can all agree this should be implemented within Bill 122 to protect the bargaining process in the future.

Finally, I want to reiterate the negotiation the PC Party is asking for, which was sent to the minister herself in a letter dated November 21. It asked them to commit to modifying regulation 274 so that we can have merit-based hiring back in our schools, so that students are receiving the best-quality education and that the principal is the one who determines who will fill that job best for his or her own school. Hiring practices must be based on who is the best person to fill the job, to improve test scores and engage our youth in extracurricular activities. At a time when math scores are down, we must make sure we are hiring the best people to bring our young Ontarians back on track and get them job-ready, shall I say? It should not be based on seniority, leaving our young graduates jobless or working at the same place they did before completing higher education. As many of the members on this side of the House have said, if the government is willing to meet that request, then we will meet them with theirs and move this bill to committee as fast as possible. However, if they will not make this compromise, then we will continue to have these discussions and speak on behalf of our communities and our constituencies.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It being close to 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1011 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Michael Gravelle: We're very pleased to welcome a delegation from the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association and the Northwestern Ontario Associated Chambers of Commerce. They're here for their lobby day, and we're glad to have them here. There's a reception, may I say, right after question period, in room 228, and we invite all the members to join us.

Let me do the introductions quickly—I've got a good list here. We've got Dave Canfield, who is the president of NOMA and, of course, the mayor of Kenora. We've got Phil Vinet, the hard-working mayor of Red Lake; Mayor Keith Hobbs, the city of Thunder Bay. We've got Councillor Iain Angus, from the city of Thunder Bay; Councillor Larry Hebert, from the city of Thunder Bay; Gary Gamsby, reeve of the township of Morley; Roy Hoffman, mayor of the town of Pickle Lake; Rebecca Johnson, a councillor from the city of Thunder Bay, representing NOACC; Andy Scribilo, the president of the Kenora Chamber of Commerce, with NOACC; George Macey, from the Marathon Chamber of Commerce, with NOACC; and Kristen Oliver, the hard-working executive director of NOMA.

We welcome you all. We'll look forward to seeing you at the reception and the lunch today.

M. Grant Crack: J'aimerais souhaiter la bienvenue à Jean-Marc Lalonde et aussi à mon ami Rheel Filion de Rockland, à Glengarry-Prescott-Russell.

Mr. Todd Smith: We could have used Jean-Marc's coaching skills last night, as the Ontario Legiskaters fell 7-3 to the Ontario Midwives.

However, I would like to introduce some guests. Melissa Bhagat is the newest employee with the official opposition. She's in the west members' gallery, and she's joined by Mitch "Ron Burgundy" Heimpel as well this morning.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to welcome Marc Xuereb, who is the president of the Waterloo Regional Labour Council, to Queen's Park today.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: It's a great pleasure of mine to welcome Mr. George Weber, who is the president and CEO of the Royal Ottawa Hospital, which is located in the great riding of Ottawa Centre. George, welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my privilege to welcome the grade 5 class from Cathy Wever Elementary Public School in my riding. They haven't arrived yet—I guess they had some problems on the highway—but they will be here shortly.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to welcome the Ontario Pork association—I don't know if they're here yet—Amy Cronin, the chair, and Ken Ovington, execu-

tive director, who are in our gallery. The Ontario Pork reception tonight is in room 228 at 4:30, and everyone's welcome.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It is a pleasure—actually, my colleague from Ottawa Centre already introduced Mr. George Weber.

I'd also like to recognize Jean-Marc Lalonde too, as the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell has. I would like him to come back and coach this hockey team that we have here. The Legiskaters lost very badly last night and last week, and I'd really like Jean-Marc to come back and coach them.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm delighted to introduce Karim Mamdani, the president and CEO of Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences; Dr. Catherine Zahn, president and CEO of the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health; George Weber, who I know has been introduced, president and CEO of the Royal Ottawa; and Carol Lambie, president and CEO of Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care. Welcome, all.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's my pleasure to introduce Mr. Hugh Moran from the Ontario Petroleum Institute, representing Ontario's 1,200 producers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On behalf of the member from Etobicoke Centre, to visit with page Niam Vora: mother, Arpana Vora; father, Adesh Vora; sisters, Sera, Naiya and Aahna; grandfather Nitin Amin; grandmother Pramila Amin; aunt Priya Amin; aunt Leena Amin; and aunt Monica Vora. Welcome to Queen's Park, on behalf of the member from Etobicoke Centre.

It is the tradition of the Speaker to introduce someone who's been introduced twice, and once to come back as a coach: Jean-Marc Lalonde from Prescott and Russell in the 36th Parliament and Glengarry-Prescott-Russell in the 37th, 38th and 39th Parliaments. Bonjour, monsieur Lalonde.

I'm also told that he's working feverishly on getting a hockey game with the Legiskaters and Quebec, as well.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm sorry; I got that wrong. It's with Quebec's midwives.

Laughter.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Sorry.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Premier, when I grew up in the north end of Fort Erie, most of my friends' parents—their moms or dads usually worked at the factory, they worked at the plant. Manufacturing helped to build our middle class; it's the backbone of communities like those that I grew up in.

There is a long, sorry list of manufacturing that has left our province. Navistar has left Chatham to go to Indiana. Xstrata has left Timmins to go to Quebec. John Deere left our area in Niagara for Wisconsin. Siemens

left Hamilton to go to Charlotte, North Carolina. Caterpillar left London to go to Indiana—I could spend my entire time, sadly, reciting this list.

Premier, there have been 300,000 manufacturing job losses in our province. These products are still being made. They're being made in North America, but they're being made everywhere but the province of Ontario. Why is that happening, and where is your plan to actually bring those jobs back to our great province of Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Leader of the Opposition will want to hear the list of businesses that have come to Ontario and jobs that have been created in Ontario, but before I go through that, I want to acknowledge that there has been a shift in manufacturing in Ontario. There is no doubt about that.

The fact that we decided as a government to support the auto industry, the fact that we have put in place regional development funds to work with businesses so that they can make the shift to advanced manufacturing—initiatives all of which the opposition voted against and did not support. We have recognized that there is a change—there's a change in the global economy, there's a change in Ontario's economy, and we believe that the best thing that we can do—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We believe that the best thing that we can do is to work with businesses to create an environment so that business will come here. We have over 400,000 net new jobs in Ontario since 2009. We need to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm moving right to identifying ridings.

Supplementary, please.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, the problem is that Ontario used to be at the top of the list for investment and job creation. Under an Ontario PC government, we'll be at the top of the list again.

I don't think that the Liberal government understands the importance of manufacturing and resource development to our economy. You can do all the research and development in the world, but unless you make something at the end of the day, it's about as useful as a two-legged stool.

We have a plan to bring in 300,000 advanced manufacturing jobs to strengthen the middle class, and not the Liberal jobs that are part-time, temp job to temp job, with no wages or benefit increases. We actually see good, strong middle-class jobs you can count on. We've got a plan to do so.

Last week, the hemorrhaging continued with the loss of jobs in Leamington, Ontario. There have been 38,000 job losses, under your leadership as Premier in manufacturing alone.

Premier, I'll ask you again: In the global economy, why are they growing manufacturing everywhere else but the province of Ontario?

1040

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to just assure the Leader of the Opposition that in my conversation on Friday with the community leaders and the business folks from the Leamington area—your member attended that meeting. It was a very important meeting.

Of course we are disappointed with the decision that Heinz made around the Leamington plant, but we will work with that community. I believe that there are many, many possibilities for that community.

But, Mr. Speaker, make no mistake. The Leader of the Opposition and his party would cut and slash across the board. They would fire civil servants. They would take workers out of education, out of health care, and they would engage in a race to the bottom in terms of working conditions and wages and benefits, because—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean—Carleton, come to order. The member from Dufferin—Caledon, come to order.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We are not going to engage in that race to the bottom. It is not responsible. The gains that organized labour have made in this province over the previous decades will not be lost by this government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: If you had worked at Heinz, if you had worked at Caterpillar, if you had worked at Volvo in Goderich that went to Pennsylvania, Gracious Living opening their plant in New York, if you lost your job at Xstrata—Premier, we have hit rock bottom. The Liberals are winning the race to rock bottom.

My plan is to put Ontario back on top, to bring in 300,000 advanced manufacturing jobs—forestry, mining, manufacturing.

Here's the other thing: You blew the Cliffs deal. This chance—it could have been what the oils sands are to Alberta. You fumbled the ball. We lost those jobs. That investment will go elsewhere.

The very same day that Cliffs walked away from the table—they said high energy rates are part of that equation; Heinz, high energy rates—you spent your time hugging it up with Al Gore, the very policies that drove hydro rates through the roof in the first place. Don't you think, considering the impact of hydro on jobs, that was a

poke in the eye? Wasn't that salt in the wounds? Wasn't it an extraordinary misjudgment to embrace the high-energy policies that are driving jobs out of our province?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Both sides are not helpful.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew will come to order.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It is extremely important that the people of Ontario listen to what the Leader of the Opposition just said, because underlying what the Leader of the Opposition just said is this: He believes, by what he just said, that we cannot have clean air in Ontario, Mr. Speaker. He believes that we have to sacrifice the environment to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Speaker, I care deeply about people losing their jobs. I care deeply about bringing jobs to Ontario. I care deeply about working with businesses, but not to sacrifice our children's health. There is no place for policies in this province that would sacrifice children to the economy.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

New question.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Rod Jackson: My question this morning is to the Premier. Good morning, Premier.

I have repeatedly asked the minister responsible for the Pan Am Games for the real numbers on the Pan Am Games after painstakingly uncovering multiple budgets. Finally, last week, we got somewhere. The minister admitted to ballooning costs and upped the \$1.4-billion budget to \$2.56 billion, but we know the spending doesn't stop there.

What scares me is that the Liberals are cutting deals with their enablers over here to cancel an investigation into the minister's lacklustre management of the Pan Am Games.

Speaker, when will the Premier tell us exactly what she's hiding? Will she tell it to us now?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I think the member opposite has demonstrated that we have provided information; we've provided the information he has asked for. The government doesn't set salaries for the TO2015 employees. It's not an agency of the government, but we have absolutely provided the information that the member opposite has asked for.

What is really important is that we understand that the investments in the Pan Am Games are investments that are going to pay off over the long term. There will be

legacies of these games in terms of affordable housing, in terms of venues.

Of course, we have to be accountable for the expenditures, but it would be great if the party opposite had some enthusiasm about these fantastic games and legacy that are going to be in place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Rod Jackson: Our kids are going to be paying for this. Premier, we're very excited about the games; we're just not excited about your mismanagement of them.

This government is saving themselves from scrutiny by cancelling the Pan Am investigation in the general government committee. Ironically, the very vocal third party Pan Am critic has sold out to make this possible. He traded Pan Am accountability for support for his union-friendly bill, which effectively cancelled this investigation.

As the government continues to point out, we are having the people's games, but, just so we all know, it's also the people's money.

Will the Premier stop hiding and commit today to continuing the Pan Am investigation into the accountability of the Pan Am secretariat? Yes or no?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the government House leader is going to want to speak to the discussions that are going on at the committee in the final supplementary, but what I want to say is that it is extremely important that the questions be asked, that we be accountable for the money that's being invested. To this point, the projects are all on time and under budget.

As the minister has said many times, it's often the capital projects that cause the problem in games like this. That is not the case. We are seeing a very good trajectory for those projects, and we expect that, as the other costs and the other investments are made, the same will hold true.

Forty-one countries and their athletes are going to be here in 2015. This is the biggest event we have held on Ontario soil. We are enthusiastic about it. We hope that the party opposite will get on board.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mr. Rod Jackson: This government has not been accurate with the numbers since the beginning. They have not been forthcoming with any of the proper numbers for the Pan Am Games and have admitted that they're going to balloon in the coming years.

Clearly, the Liberals do not want the Pan Am Games investigated. Clearly, the NDP doesn't want it either. Their committee manoeuvring proves that they will go to any length to avoid accountability for their compulsive spending habits. This includes the manipulation of the vocal third party Pan Am critic, who has bought support for his union-loving bill in exchange for cancelling the Pan Am investigation.

We want successful games and respect for the hard-working families of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm very concerned about that last statement. I'd ask you to withdraw.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Withdrawn.

Premier, allow the investigation into the Pan Am management, or ask the minister to step down. You choose.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, we are trying to make this Legislature work. The fact of the matter is, the estimates committee and the general government committee are both looking into the Pan Am Games. There were literally thousands of documents that were delivered to the estimates committee, the first tranche that went forward. We at general government are looking at a way that we can look at Pan Am and also look at some very important legislation: Bill 105, which will reduce taxes for businesses in this province. But the Progressive Conservative Party is playing games. They are filibustering in committee—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. The member from Simcoe—Grey will come to order. Thank you.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, it is a pattern. They are filibustering in committee so that taxes cannot be cut for small businesses.

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The other night, the bravery awards given out by the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario were delayed by 20 minutes because of the bell-ringing antics of the opposition.

We are trying to make this work—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The leader of the third party.

MINING INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My first question is to the Premier. Yesterday, I asked the Acting Premier if the Liberal government signed an initial agreement or term sheet with Cliffs Natural Resources. The Acting Premier wouldn't even tell us whether one existed.

Today I'll ask the Premier: Did the government have an agreement with Cliffs?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the leader of the third party asked this question yesterday. I know that she knows that what she's referring to is commercially sensitive and some personal information. I know that she's aware of that. We're going to continue to work diligently to make sure that we're ready to support development in the Ring of Fire. That is our commitment. That is where our commitment has been all along. But I think that asking for information that is rightly confidential does not advance the cause of the relationship and the development of the Ring of Fire in any way.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: We would love to see the cause be advanced in some way; the Liberals don't seem to be able to advance it at all.

In May 2012, the finance minister confirmed the government had reached an agreement with Cliffs regarding plans to process chromite in Capreol. Either the minister

was mistaken or this agreement exists. If it does, what commitments did the Liberals make in that term sheet?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The reality is that there were discussions and there were terms of reference for those discussions. But there was a lot of commercially sensitive information that was part of that discussion, and that commercially sensitive information is not available.

We're going to continue to work to develop the Ring of Fire. We are setting up the development corporation, as the Minister of Northern Development and Mines has spoken about. We are not backing away from our commitment to develop this very rich deposit. I know that there are mayors from communities in the north who are here today and who are going to be meeting with various of us, who are very, very interested in that commitment because it has to do with infrastructure, it has to do with economic development and it has to do with the capacity of the north to create the jobs that we know are necessary. That's why we're not stepping away.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: A KWG Resources press release indicates that the term sheet the government signed with Cliffs included commitments to an "attractive" electricity rate, as well as commitments to build a road to move people, equipment and ore in and out of the Ring of Fire. We know that none of these things have happened. Did the government make those commitments?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, there were arrangements that were made. There was a discussion that happened with a business. We were very clear that we were pleased about that. It's unfortunate that, for their own business model and their own reasons, Cliffs has stepped away. But there are other companies who are interested in working with the government, and we look forward to working with them.

I also hope that the federal government will be a partner in the development of the Ring of Fire. This has been the situation all along: We need the federal government, which, in fact, has sung the praises of the Ring of Fire and talked about what a huge opportunity it is and how involved they are. In fact, they are not as involved as they need to be. We need them at the table with us as we work with First Nations, municipalities and commercial interests. We look forward to those partnerships allowing us to continue to work to develop the Ring of Fire.

JOB CREATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Blaming Ottawa is this Liberal government's "the dog ate my homework" excuse, and we hear it far too often in this Legislature.

My next question is for the Premier. As a cabinet minister, the Premier herself went to Capreol and announced "thousands of jobs." Those were the government's words: "thousands of jobs." People want to know what happened to those jobs.

The government said they signed an agreement on behalf of the people of Ontario. Why won't the Premier

release the agreement with Cliffs so Ontarians can see whether the Liberals actually lived up to their end of that agreement?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I understand that the leader of the third party is disappointed. We are disappointed as well; that goes without saying. But the Ring of Fire is not about one company; it's not about one level of government. The leader of the third party can chastise me for calling on the federal government. I think it's eminently responsible of us to call on the federal government to work with us.

I'm not blaming the federal government, I say to the leader of the third party. What I'm saying is that if this extraordinary opportunity is going to be realized, we need all levels of government working together. We need to be working with First Nations, we need to be working with commercial interests because it is a massive development—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew will come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —that kind of partnership. In fact, in their letter of November 20, 2013, the press release, Cliffs says that they will continue to work with the Ontario government, First Nations communities and other interested parties to explore potential solutions related to the critical issue of infrastructure. We look forward to continuing—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, as Liberal dithering and inaction has pushed Cliffs away from the Ring of Fire, people are beginning to ask about the challenges that other companies are facing in the Ring of Fire. How many other term sheets has the government signed? How many of these other companies are facing the same problems that pushed Cliffs away?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: When I was Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, I can remember saying in this House and in other venues that the development of the Ring of Fire was a very complex issue, and it was going to require that we understand the many moving parts. One of those parts, Mr. Speaker, is the relationship with First Nations. I said very clearly to my colleagues—and they will attest to this—that if we did not move in a responsible and coordinated way, if we did not make sure that we had environmental issues dealt with and that we worked with First Nations, we would not be able to develop the Ring of Fire—

Interjection.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite from Renfrew talks about delays, but Mr. Speaker, the reality is, there are many complex issues that need to be dealt with in the development of the Ring of Fire. We are working on those, and we look forward to working with commercial interests, including Cliffs, as we go forward. We're going to develop the Ring of Fire, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Yesterday, the Minister of Finance told reporters that when it comes to the government's jobs plan, the net result is that it's working. For people in Capreol who received an empty promise of thousands of jobs or, frankly, the families in Leamington watching the cornerstone of their economy pack up and leave, the net result is that people aren't working.

I know the Premier likes to run, but she can't run away from the fact that these jobs are her responsibility. When will the government stop passing the buck, stop playing politics and admit that the status quo just isn't working when it comes to creating and protecting jobs in this province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I understand the rhetoric of the leader of the third party. In fact, it is the combined responsibility of the private sector and the public sector to work together. It is our responsibility as government to create the conditions so that the private sector can create jobs.

I'm just going to talk about some of the places where that is happening—because I understand. I'm concerned about what happened in Leamington, and I know that the leader of the third party knows I am. But I'm also pleased that in Ottawa at Ericsson Canada, there are new jobs: 35 new jobs, retaining 105. In Cambridge, Ontario, at Toyota, our investment of \$16.8 million created approximately 400 jobs; at GM in Ingersoll, over 2,500 jobs as a result of the \$250-million investment that the government made; Green Arc Tire Manufacturing in St. Marys, Ontario: 340 jobs.

There is a long list of job creation, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to foster those conditions for job creation.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is to the Premier.

Premier, I can't believe you're trying to blame the federal government for your failure in the Ring of Fire. I, like many of my colleagues, was dismayed at your comments over the weekend suggesting this. Yesterday in the House, your finance minister also tried to shift blame and refused to take any responsibility for the deal with Cliffs falling through.

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Premier, your government was quick to take credit when you made the deal with Cliffs. Your May 9, 2012, press release stated, "Thousands of jobs coming to northern Ontario." By taking credit for the Ring of Fire before delivering, you and your government deserve the lion's share of the blame for your failure. Premier, now that the dust has settled, who have you held accountable for the failure of your government on this issue?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I'm not blaming the federal government. Let me be really clear about that: I'm not blaming the federal government. What I am saying, which is what we have said all along, is that there are many partners who are needed in order to be able to explore and exploit the resources and the possibility of the Ring of Fire. It is impossible for one

company or one order of government to do this. It's a huge project, and from the beginning we have said that we need the private sector, we need First Nations and we need the federal government and municipalities to work with us so that we can develop that resource. That is not inconsistent; in fact, it is consistent with what we have said from the beginning. And I will be calling on Prime Minister Harper, as I have already done, to work with us.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Have you called them?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Have I called him? Absolutely. I've written to him, and we're trying to set up a meeting. I look forward to that meeting, and I look forward to the opportunity to have a discussion with the Prime Minister about his role and about our combined partnership.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Norm Miller: Again to the Premier: With your 2012 press release, you would have sworn the mine was about to open. Premier, with all the bureaucracy that your government has set up around this project, it's no wonder you're having difficulty finding accountability. With overlapping ministries, the Ring of Fire Secretariat, panels and a negotiator that you appointed, there's a lot of talk and very little action. In your 2012 press release, five different ministers and you yourself were quoted.

Premier, had you taken the advice of our northern white paper, we wouldn't be in this place today. Why don't you do it now? Implement the PC plan and put a single minister in charge of the Ring of Fire.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We won't implement the outline that the opposition has laid out, Mr. Speaker, because it's simplistic. It does not recognize the complexity of the development opportunity. It doesn't recognize that there are, as I said, many moving parts. I have said from the beginning of this opportunity that we have to work with all players in order for us to be successful.

I travelled to Webequie when I was the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, and I met with the community there, and we talked about the training opportunities—training opportunities that are being made available right now. Those training opportunities are being set up, and there are young people at Webequie who are going to be able to be trained and will be ready to work in the Ring of Fire as we explore, as we develop that resource. That's the kind of process that will be necessary. It takes time—I recognize that—and it will be successful.

CHILD POVERTY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Premier. In a report released today, Campaign 2000 strongly condemns this government's 2012 decision to delay scheduled increases in the Ontario Child Benefit and to freeze the minimum wage. They blame these Liberal government decisions for the slow progress in reducing the child poverty in this province.

In 2008 the government made grand statements to reduce child poverty by 25% over five years, and in 2013 it is absolutely nowhere near achieving what is a very

modest goal. How does this government justify its lack of action in reducing child poverty by 25%?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Children and Youth Services, who has responsibility for the Poverty Reduction Strategy, will want to speak to the supplementary, but I want to just say to the member of the third party that she knows full well that it's our government that introduced a Poverty Reduction Strategy in this province. We are the first government to have a Poverty Reduction Strategy. We have an Ontario Child Benefit because we introduced it and we implemented it. In fact, the child poverty rate in Ontario fell by over 9% during the height of the recession.

I believe that the member of the third party is talking about doing more and doing it more quickly. I understand that that would be her request, and I thank Campaign 2000 for their report. But make no mistake: We are committed to poverty reduction, we continue to be committed to poverty reduction, and we will move on future actions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Again to the Premier: The Campaign 2000 document cites a number of other devastating cuts to supports for low-income people made by this government. For example, the 2012 Ontario budget saw the cancellation of benefits for people on social assistance, including health benefits and, tragically, the Community Start-up and Maintenance Benefit. The government talked about reducing child poverty by 25% in 2008—but this report makes it crystal clear that part of the blame for its failure lies in policy decisions made by this very government.

How does the government finally explain those decisions to the hundreds of thousands of Ontario children who go to bed hungry every night?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you for the question.

I, too, would like to thank Campaign 2000 for the report that they've released today. I, in fact, have met with Campaign 2000 on a number of occasions, and I share their concern with respect to our children and the future of this province.

I'd like to reiterate that it was this government that brought in the Ontario children's benefit, which is paid out to 950,000 children. That has been directly related to the fall of 9.2% of our child poverty rate, and the report says that we were successful in that during the height of the greatest recession that we've had.

Ontario has the second-lowest low-income rate in the entire country, Speaker. We've lifted 47,000 children out of poverty, and we prevented 61,000 children from getting into poverty. We have done a lot of work with respect to minimum wage, with respect to social assistance reforms and with respect to our housing benefits.

Is there more work to do? Absolutely, and that's why we're creating a new poverty reduction strategy and why we're all working together to that end. I am absolutely committed to this.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, last Thursday, the government announced it would be introducing the Ending Coal for Cleaner Air Act. This important piece of legislation, if passed, would ensure that Ontario never returns to the days of using dirty coal-fired plants to generate electricity for the province. This policy is one that I have had strong support for from the people of Ottawa–Orléans for the last 10 years. The closure of the last coal plants in the province is, in my opinion, as an engineer and as a former business owner, a momentous achievement that will help protect the health and environment of Ontarians for generations to come. We must think of our children and our grandchildren. It is a significant landmark in the global fight against climate change.

Mr. Speaker, could the Minister of Energy please inform the House about the importance of the bill that will be introduced by the Minister of the Environment later today?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member for his support.

Last week, I had the pleasure of standing with the Premier, the Minister of the Environment, the Minister of Health, our host, Environmental Defence, and a special guest, former Vice-President Al Gore, to announce our vision of a coal-free future for Ontario.

With Nanticoke generating station slated to close at the end of this year and the Thunder Bay generating station set for conversion to advanced biomass, Ontario will have a coal-free electricity system.

To ensure that we never go back to the days of burning dirty coal, our government introduced a bill that, if passed, will make it illegal for the province to burn coal for power.

Mr. Speaker, our government is a global leader on this issue. We are the first jurisdiction in North America to accomplish this goal, and it's a cause for celebration for all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you, Minister. Now that we've reached this significant milestone, it is important to ensure that we don't go backwards. Climate change is an issue that is not going to disappear, and Ontario needs to remain a global leader going forward, because if nobody takes action, it will be impossible to avoid its catastrophic consequences.

As Tim Gray, executive director of Environmental Defence, said, "Ontario has shown the world that bold action on climate change can be done. Ontarians should feel proud to live in the first jurisdiction in North America that is kicking the coal habit, a place that today took immediate meaningful action on climate change."

Mr. Speaker, getting off coal is not only a major triumph in the fight against climate change, but will also provide significant health benefits to the people of Ontario. Can the minister please tell us about the health and environmental benefits of eliminating dirty coal-fired generation in the province?

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Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Getting off coal is the single largest climate change initiative in North America. It will save \$4.4 billion in avoided environmental and health care costs. It's going to mean a better quality of life for people with asthma, and less children and seniors suffering from air-quality-related illness. It will mean fewer smog days and lower carbon emissions, equivalent to taking seven million cars off the road.

Finally, I would like to quote Mr. Gore when he was here last week. He said that future generations will ask, "How did you find the moral courage to act" against climate change? And part of the answer will be: "Ontario, Canada, led the way."

CHRIS MAZZA

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health. Dr. Chris Mazza is under criminal investigation for his role in the Ornge air ambulance scandal. He is under investigation by the College of Physicians and Surgeons for his unethical conduct as a physician. He pleaded mental incapacity when called to testify at the public accounts committee and had to be brought here under a special Speaker's warrant. Front-line staff and patients were put at risk as a direct result of his gross mismanagement and fraudulent schemes and self-aggrandizement.

Now we learn that he's back on the Ministry of Health payroll, working in the emergency ward at the Thunder Bay regional health centre.

Speaker, how can the minister justify this offensive disrespect for the front-line staff at Ornge, for the patients whose lives were put at risk and for the taxpayers of this province who were ripped off for millions as a result of this—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite knows full well that hiring decisions are made by hospitals. They are made independently. Hospitals have the responsibility for the doctors that they hire. To suggest that I run the human resources departments in hospitals across this province is kind of ridiculous.

I will say, Speaker, that in order for a doctor to be hired, they must be certified by the College of Physicians and Surgeons. I'll look forward to the supplementary, where I can speak more to this.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, based on that response, I call into question the competency of whoever was doing the hiring at that hospital and I call into question the competency of this minister who allows it to happen. Once again, she is pleading ignorance and that she has no authority. We've heard that throughout this entire file: She can do nothing; she has no authority.

Apart from the obvious irreparable damage that was done to our emergency ambulance service and the harm that was done to the men and women who were forced to

work under this man's tyranny, he travelled the world in the lap of luxury at taxpayers' expense. He saddled taxpayers with multi-millions of dollars of debt, thanks to his mismanagement. He should not be in an emergency ward; he should be in a jail.

This minister stands by and tells us she has nothing to do with this. She has a responsibility—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I do find it strange that the member opposite is suggesting that we investigate, convict and jail someone. That's not how we do business on this side of the House.

Let me reiterate: Hiring decisions are local decisions, made by the local hospitals. The College of Physicians and Surgeons—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

It is very difficult for me to seize control at all when I've got members on the government side, while the minister is answering, provoking and the other people accepting the provocation and responding. Not while the minister is answering or when the question is being put; I think it's less than polite.

Finish, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker. Just to reiterate, physician accreditation is the sole and independent responsibility of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est également pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre has been in crisis for almost a month. This crisis means there are no beds available for patients who need to be admitted. It means cancelled surgeries. It means that patients are being cared for in hallways. The hospital is 54 beds over capacity, and there are 64 people waiting for placement.

The minister can talk a good game about investing in long-term care, but clearly this talk hasn't resulted in action on the ground. Can the minister explain what she is doing to address the crisis faced by Thunder Bay?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member opposite for this question. This is a question that has been raised by my colleagues the member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan and the member from Thunder Bay—Superior North. There is very much an issue in Thunder Bay. I can tell you that the LHIN, the hospital and the other providers in the area are very much focusing on resolving the issues that have been raised.

We have come a long way when it comes to providing more supports at home to free up hospital beds, but I must say that in Thunder Bay I acknowledge there is a problem that we are very focused on resolving.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Well, the hospital in Thunder Bay is struggling, and it's doing its best to cope, but they can only do so much when dozens of patients are stuck in hallways because they have nowhere to go. In the hospital, hallway nursing is not quality care.

This government promised to address wait times for home care, but clearly something is not working. We are just on the cusp of flu season, and Thunder Bay residents need to know that their hospital will be there for them in their time of need.

I ask the Minister of Health again: What is her plan to address the health crisis in Thunder Bay?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Again, thank you to the member opposite. This is an issue, as I have said, that has been brought to my attention by our members, the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan and the member from Thunder Bay—Superior North.

Our LHIN is very focused on resolving these issues. These are complex problems. We are opening new long-term-care beds in Thunder Bay. There is good progress being made, but clearly there is more to do, and we're committed to doing that work.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Ma question est pour la ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement, l'honorable Linda Jeffrey. Recently, Friday, November 22 was National Housing Day—an important topic and a fundamental right for Ontarians because, of course, everybody deserves to have safe and secure housing.

In my own riding of Etobicoke North, our government has made significant investments, such as the recently finished renovations on affordable housing units at 2667 and 2677 Kipling Avenue, but, Speaker, as you'll appreciate, there is still more work to be done. This is especially important and part of a just society; when people live in safe and affordable housing, our communities thrive.

Good housing promotes health, safety, and physical and emotional well-being, and we know that children even do better in school. Speaker, through you to the minister: Could she explain to my constituents in Etobicoke North what investments our government is making to ensure that Ontarians have access to affordable housing?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I really want to thank the member for the question.

Tackling homelessness is a very important issue to our government, because there is nothing more distressing than the thought of a child, a senior or a family being unsure of where they're going to sleep at night. That's why we've invested over \$3 billion in affordable housing since 2003.

That investment is the largest in our province's history. It's meant that we've been able to create more than 17,000 affordable housing units and repaired more than a quarter of a million social and affordable housing units.

By investing in Ontarians, we make sure that they have access to affordable housing, and we can ensure that

they are better prepared to enter the workforce, because having a place to call home is the first step out of poverty. It is the first step to realizing new opportunities. It is the first step to a better quality of life.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I appreciate, Madam Minister, your response about our government's investments. Ontario's most vulnerable, of course, deserve this, but I raise a genuine concern in this chamber for all parties to consider: Despite the significant investment that Ontario has made, the federal Conservative government has largely failed to tackle this pressing issue. Canada remains the only G8 nation that does not have a national housing strategy, which, of course, undermines the progress that we have made in Ontario, leading to a piecemeal, band-aid solution approach.

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The feds also ignore calls from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, as well as the city of Toronto, to have a stable and long-term funding source so that we can make the necessary long-term investments in affordable housing.

Speaker, I would invite the minister to share with this chamber about her recent excursion to Ottawa and the meetings that she had with her counterparts at the federal level.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: While I was in Ottawa last week, I reiterated our government's call to the federal government to come up with a stable long-term solution to homelessness in Ontario. But despite my invitation for a conversation, the minister failed to meet with me—a failure that has occurred since December 2009, which was the last time the federal Conservatives sat down with the provinces and territories to talk about homelessness. This, despite the fact that last month, Minister Candice Bergen told the National Conference on Ending Homelessness that the federal government is looking for even more ways to support communities in developing solutions to homelessness.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I have a suggestion for Minister Bergen: Talk to the provinces. Pick up the phone and talk to us. For too long, Ontarians have failed to receive the attention and the investments that we need and deserve from the federal government.

Our government will continue to stand up for Ontario's most vulnerable.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier, with respect to a new regional hospital in south Niagara. Yesterday was, as I termed it, put-up-or-shut-up day when it comes to the new hospital in south Niagara. You ask me why I say, "Put up or shut up"? Because you guys have been kind of on the fence on this issue. Witness the February article in the Niagara Falls Review: "Wynne Off to Rocky Start on Hospital File"

"Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne, in her first week on the job, threw cold water on the proposed south Niag-

ara hospital and set back hospital reform in Niagara two years."

We're trying to get a positive answer, get you off that fence a little bit. Conveniently, yesterday, when we had the put-up-or-shut-up motion in the House, the minister announced that she was finally looking at a programming grant for that hospital.

Let me ask you this: How much exactly will that planning grant be worth, when will you actually make that announcement, and is it actually budgeted in the Ministry of Health budget?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I cannot tell you how refreshing it is to hear the Leader of the Opposition advocating for hospital capital projects. I have to say this is just fantastic news. It is interesting that he's focusing on one particular hospital in a riding that happens to be in a by-election situation, but I'm sure his passion will be just as strong for the other hospital projects that are out there as well. I know the member from Grey-Bruce would love to hear a question from you on the Markdale hospital, for example.

I am happy to say that we are going to be looking forward to taking the next step when it comes to the new hospital in Niagara. That's an exciting initiative, and I'm really pleased that we're moving to one more new hospital in a long, long line of new hospitals that were built under this government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I don't think I actually got a straight answer there, Speaker, so let me try again—and in answer to your question, yes, I'm confident that a PC government will get our economy growing, set priorities and build other projects around the province.

The problem is that the only way to get you guys to do something is when a seat is at risk. The only way to actually get you to do something, like a subway to Scarborough, is when you're worried about losing a seat. Witness in Windsor: When you had a seat at risk in Windsor, you suddenly moved with great speed to announce a mega hospital for Windsor. You announced the planning grant there and the millions of dollars in a matter of months.

Dr. Smith's report has been out for over a year now, and you still won't answer the basic questions. Now, I caution you: Don't do what the NDP is doing. They're trying to be all things to all people, everything under the sun. Their main motive? Protecting the seat of the member from Welland, as opposed to what's in the best interests of health care for the people in Niagara region. I know the game they're playing; I just want to know what you're playing.

You did for Windsor during a by-election. Whatever the cause, by-election or not, it's the right thing to do. Will you green-light that plan—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Be seated, please. Thank you.
Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm just going to suggest that the Leader of the Opposition talk to some of his colleagues who actually have been proud to be at the opening of hospitals in their communities.

Maybe you could speak to the member from Barrie. He was there and happy to be at the opening of that hospital.

The member from Cambridge, I think, will be very pleased with the redevelopment moving ahead in Cambridge.

Just yesterday, I was in Burlington with the member from Burlington—a Conservative member—where we talked about re-scoping the project at Burlington so they will have a brand new emergency department, a seven-storey tower. This is all good news.

I've been in Milton with the member from Halton, who has been very pleased to be there for the groundbreaking or the ribbon-cutting, whatever it is.

We are building hospitals across this province. Welcome to the party—a little bit late, but welcome.

LONG-TERM CARE

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Recent reports from Hamilton tell us that our area is among the worst in Ontario when it comes to seniors finding a space in a long-term-care home.

In the Hamilton area, seniors can expect to wait up to three and a half years to get placed. They're being subjected to terrible stress and crisis before being forced to jump through never-ending hoops in order to get the care they need. The local CCAC has said that their hands are tied by government legislation. Is the minister going to address the problems that are forcing seniors into homelessness and other terrible situations?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question. I would be very interested if there were cases of seniors being forced into homelessness. I would hope that the member opposite would bring that to my attention.

I think it's important to note that yes, there is a wait for long-term care. But thankfully, as a result of the superb work that is being done by our LHINs, our CCACs and the organizations that they're responsible for, we are seeing the wait-times for long-term-care homes decline. That's an extraordinary change. It's happening because we are spending more to get more people the care they need in their own homes. This is a foundational part of our transformation of our health care system to provide the right care at the right time in the right place, and the right place is home, whenever possible.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: As the crisis in long-term care unfolds, we are hearing of ridiculous decisions being made that bump seniors who have already been on the wait-list for years.

After four years, 92-year-old Marion Forrest finally got a space, but the day before she was supposed to move

in, she was taken to the hospital. Due to her very short stay in the hospital, she wasn't able to be there during that move, and she lost her space. She ended up with nowhere to live.

Eighty-eight-year-old Antoniette Di Falco was given two possible placements. Both of them were entirely inappropriate. One was in a unit for Alzheimer's and dementia, which she does not have, and the other one was to be shared with a woman who has to live in total darkness at all times. Because she rejected these two offers, she was kicked off the waiting list.

Again, I will ask the minister to end this shameful treatment of our seniors and ensure that the long-term-care system works for them and not against them.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Absolutely. I think the member opposite would acknowledge that we have opened 500 long-term-care beds in Hamilton since 2003, so we are making progress.

I also want to clarify that if someone is in a hospital and cannot move into a long-term-care home, they retain their space on that wait-list, so they will be cared for until another vacancy comes up and they can move into the long-term-care home of their choice.

We're doing our very best to provide the right care for seniors, and we will continue this work. It's important work. I think it's important that the member opposite actually understands the policy.

1130

GREAT LAKES WATER QUALITY

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question this morning for the Minister of the Environment. Over the years, constituents from my riding of Oakville and the region of Halton have been raising serious concerns regarding the toxic contamination of the Randle Reef, located just down Lake Ontario's shoreline, in Hamilton.

The sediment at the Randle Reef site in Hamilton harbour is contaminated with coal tar. Chemicals in coal tar are toxic, obviously, and they're harmful to aquatic life in the harbour. With the cleanup of the Sydney, Nova Scotia, tar ponds in progress, the Randle Reef site is now the largest coal-tar-contaminated sediment site in all of Canada.

Speaker, through you, would the minister share with the House what the Ontario government is doing to protect the health of Lake Ontario and its aquatic life from the contaminated Randle Reef in Hamilton harbour?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I would like to thank the member for what is an excellent question.

The provincial government, as members of the House would know, is committed to the remediation of contaminated sites all over the Great Lakes. The province of Ontario, through the Ministry of the Environment, has committed to an investment of \$46.3 million for the cleanup of Randle Reef in Hamilton harbour.

The Ministry of the Environment has partnered with Environment Canada and others, including municipal partners in the city of Hamilton, the city of Burlington

and region of Halton, US Steel Canada and the Hamilton Port Authority. I'm pleased that all funding partners have now finalized agreements to move forward with the cleanup.

The cleanup of Randle Reef represents a significant step towards delisting Hamilton harbour as an area of concern. We look forward to working with all partners as this project moves forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: That's excellent news about the commitment to the remediation of Randle Reef. I think all constituents are going to be pleased to hear that this contamination down the shore is a very important concern of the government and is going to be dealt with appropriately.

Changing the image of Hamilton harbour to a place with restored water quality and sustainable ecosystems should also increase property values and should lead to the growth of commercial business.

Constituents in my riding of Oakville understand the importance of the Great Lakes to this province. They understand that the Great Lakes provide drinking water to more than 80% of the people of Ontario, as well as recreation, power generation and economic prosperity. But they also understand that the Great Lakes are in trouble. So, Speaker, through you, would the minister explain what the government is doing to ensure that the Randle Reef exercise in remediation is not the end and that the work continues?

Hon. James J. Bradley: This government recognizes that the Great Lakes are vitally important to the people of Ontario for our drinking water, for our quality of life and our prosperity.

Scientists tell us, however, that we're facing new challenges that are overwhelming old solutions. We need new initiatives to restore and protect the Great Lakes. That is why we've introduced Bill 6, the proposed Great Lakes Protection Act. The Great Lakes Protection Act is designed to give the province new tools to restore and protect our Great Lakes so they are drinkable, swimmable and fishable.

We are grateful to all members of this House for their input on Bill 6. I think we have an opportunity, together, to achieve considerable success in this province with the passing of this legislation.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Minister, the Clarington transformer station was to be built on the Oak Ridges moraine and has been before your ministry for about four or five years.

Originally, this plan was a small-scale transformer station and received the appropriate environmental assessment. However, Hydro One has since then increased the size of the transformer station without the necessary environmental assessments.

The Oak Ridges moraine is home, as you know, to the largest aquifer in North America.

Dr. John Cherry, an expert in hydrogeology from the University of Guelph, was retained by the Enniskillen Environmental Association to conduct an independent review of the environmental studies to date. Dr. Cherry concluded that the class environmental assessment was completely inadequate.

Insufficient well-monitoring infrastructure has been installed and the appropriate hydraulic study has not been conducted. The cost of the project will vastly exceed the original estimate of \$280 million.

Minister, I ask you to ask Hydro One to move the transformer station from the Oak Ridges moraine and protect the drinking water of millions of people in Ontario.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I want to inform the House, first of all, that the member has taken the opportunity to communicate with me on numerous occasions about this by means of letters, which have been forthcoming, so I want to recognize that that has happened so far.

The environmental assessment process requires projects to be developed in a way that is protective of human health and the environment, and time is taken to ensure that all of these standards and objectives are met.

The Ministry of the Environment has received some 56 requests asking that an individual environmental assessment is undertaken for the proposed Clarington transformer station. The Ministry of the Environment officials are now reviewing those requests, and all input will be given very serious consideration before a determination is made as to the bump-up request.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much for that response and the compliment, Minister.

But, Minister, last week the vice-president of the OPA, the Ontario Power Authority, Amir Shalaby, was addressing the Durham Strategic Energy Alliance. Of course, the main topic of the day was the uncertainty around the nuclear energy sector, completely. However, at the meeting, Mr. Shalaby stated, and I quote the media report, that "the OPA supports Hydro One's plan to build the station on the Oak Ridges moraine in Clarington."

This raises the question of a senior executive at the OPA making an open statement about his approval long before this approval you've just addressed has even been brought to the attention of the minister, I'm sure, and before the ministry's assessment to review process.

I'm asking you today to do due diligence on the progress. Look at options for the relocation of this site long before you forge ahead and ruin the aquifers on the Oak Ridges moraine, or at least do the appropriate studies.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Of course, that is why we have a very comprehensive and extensive environmental assessment process, which often is criticized by members of the member's party. I know he hasn't done so, but some of his other colleagues are very critical of the environmental assessment process.

I want to say to the member that the 56 requests asking for the individual environmental assessment are all being given various consideration. The individual to whom he

had made reference has no more influence or sway over this particular decision than any of the 56 people who have already asked that there be a consideration for what we call a bump-up, or more extensive individual environmental assessment. I want to assure the member, that consideration will be very serious and extensive.

LEGAL AID

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Attorney General. There are legal aid clinics in our communities that provide an integral and fundamental service. They provide us with access to justice. There are clinics that provide services to historically vulnerable groups like aboriginal people, seniors and the disabled, and there are those groups that provide services to geographic areas.

In the region of Peel, we have two centres, but based on population—the region of Peel has 1.3 million residents. However, when we look at funding, we receive half of the funding of other municipalities when it comes to a per capita basis. Fair share for Peel is not a strange issue to Peel. We've been underfunded on many issues, in many areas.

I'm asking the minister today: Will he commit to ensuring that the residents of Peel receive their fair share when it comes to access to justice?

Hon. John Gerretsen: As the member well knows, we are committed to making sure that legal aid is available throughout the province of Ontario for those individuals who need it. It's with that in mind that this government—even in tough economic times, when our budget isn't balanced yet—allocated an additional \$30 million specifically for family law and to the legal aid clinics. We have been working with Legal Aid Ontario over the last four to five months, since the budget was passed, to make sure that the funding goes to those clinics that need the funding.

The Ministry of the Attorney General truly believes in the clinic system. We want to fund them, and that's why the additional funding was made available. I'm sure that Peel will get its appropriate resources.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1139 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. Michael Harris: I rise today in the Legislature to call on all members of this House to work together to make sure an important piece of legislation is moved closer towards becoming law. In fact, I'm speaking about Bill 69, the Prompt Payment Act. It passed second reading with unanimous support back on May 16. Since then, I've received a stack of letters, literally, to my constituency office from local contractors, asking me why it

isn't a priority to the government to proceed to third and final reading.

Instead, we see symbolic government legislation clogging our committees, rather than bills directly affecting jobs and the economy and good local employers in—across Ontario, as a matter of fact. Bill 69 contributes to employment, apprenticeship growth and investment in Ontario-made machinery, and allows our businesses to bid on more projects so they can grow and prosper.

According to a letter I received from a company in my riding, Dordan Mechanical, in fact, 31 states have prompt payment for the private sector, while 49 states and the feds have this for publicly funded infrastructure projects. The list goes on, with Australia, New Zealand etc. Clearly, it is time for Ontario to catch up with our global competitors before it is too late.

In fact, as one business—Kappeler Masonry in my riding—put it, “As a business, nothing is more important than our cash flow. When that becomes uncertain, every decision we make becomes more risky and more costly.” I've heard from many other great contractors from my riding, like Ball Construction, G&A Masonry and the Grand Valley Construction Association. This needs to be made a priority, Speaker. I know you know that.

CHILD POVERTY

Mr. Jonah Schein: This morning, Campaign 2000 released its annual report card that measures child and family poverty in Ontario. Today's report card showed that one in seven children in this province remain in poverty, and that 35% of people using food banks in Ontario are children.

Instead of making investments to reduce poverty, this government is failing to address the inadequacy of minimum wage, social assistance and child benefits, and it continues to make damaging cuts to programs like the Community Start-up and Maintenance Benefit.

Rather than invest in food security and health promotion, this government spends our money to treat sickness. Last year, diabetes cost Ontario \$5.6 billion, according to the Canadian Diabetes Association.

While the government fails to understand or prioritize food security, people across this province do. In recent weeks, I've met with grade 5 students in my riding at St. Clare Catholic School and at Dewson Street Public School. These young people understand the injustice of seeing classmates arrive at school hungry. They feel the stigma and shame when they can't afford to pay school fees for things like snack programs.

This month in Windsor, delegates from Sustain Ontario's “Bring Food Home” conference sent a clear message back to Toronto. They said it's time to take action to make sure that children in Ontario have access to food and food education in their schools.

A recent Healthy Kids Panel report called on this government to take action to reduce poverty and to establish a universal student nutrition program for all publicly funded elementary and secondary schools in Ontario,

including in First Nations communities. The report is called *No Time to Wait*, and that is a message that I hope this government will finally hear.

DR. NORMAN BETHUNE
COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE

Ms. Soo Wong: I rise today to share good news from Dr. Norman Bethune Collegiate in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt. This high school is recognized for excellence in many areas, such as arts, music, science and sports.

This year, Dr. Norman Bethune is recognized as having the largest DECA chapter in the city of Toronto. DECA stands for Demonstrating Excellence, Celebrating Achievement, and is a high school club for business students. At Bethune, this club was started eight years ago, and now has over 150 students competing in categories such as entrepreneurship, marketing, business law and ethics, hospitality and management.

Recently, Bethune's DECA students competed at the Toronto regional competition. I am happy to inform the House that over 40 Bethune students received top-10 medals in the various categories. The students will be competing in the provincial competition in February 2014. The final level of competition is an opportunity to represent Canada in Atlanta, Georgia, in April 2014.

I want to acknowledge the leadership of principal Sandy Kaskens, teacher Krista Yeung and the entire Dr. Norman Bethune high school and the students at the DECA club.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure everyone in this House would like to join me in congratulating and wishing the Bethune students much success in the provincial competition.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Six, years ago, a once-in-a-lifetime mining discovery was made in Ontario's Far North, and we call it, of course, the Ring of Fire—six years, Speaker.

Since then, we've come no further in seeing it become a reality, and the blame lays squarely at the feet of this government. In fact, with the Cliffs announcement last week, we may actually have taken a step backwards.

City council in Sudbury was certainly concerned. On October 29, Sudbury city council passed an urgent resolution on the Ring of Fire. It stated, and I'll read it here, "that the provincial government be requested to make the Ring of Fire a priority and take immediate action to work with all parties to resolve outstanding issues, including the question of the proposed north-south transportation corridor." Sadly, Speaker, Sudbury's issue and their motion fell on deaf ears, and we saw the results with Cliffs last week.

As Sudbury council noted, the chromite project was expected to directly employ over 1,200 people across northern Ontario, with over \$3 billion in capital spend-

ing, creating 2,500 construction jobs. Now that resulting wealth and prosperity are in doubt.

Whether it's the Ring of Fire, the Far North Act, closed forestry mills and tourist centres, bungled wildlife management or the ONTC fire sale, this government has, plain and simple, failed northern Ontario. The Ontario PC's have a plan, and we'll see it through.

WORTLEY VILLAGE

Ms. Peggy Sattler: The world now knows what we in London have known for a very long time. Earlier this month, Wortley Village, a wonderful community tucked away in Old South within my riding of London West, was recognized as the best neighbourhood in Canada in the annual Great Places competition sponsored by the Canadian Institute of Planners.

Of the 68 communities nominated for this award, Wortley Village rose to the top for two main reasons.

First, it feels like a community. Every day, you'll see people walking or biking to work or to shop. You'll see friends chatting over coffee in a village bakery or enjoying a great restaurant meal. You'll see neighbours gathering for festivals or recreational activities on the beautiful village green. You'll see parents walking their kids to school and people walking their dogs at night.

The second reason is the diversity and vitality of its residents and businesses. Mixed housing options enable people of different ages, occupations and socio-economic backgrounds to participate and contribute. Unique businesses, interesting stores and an eclectic array of services sustain a thriving local economy. People who live in the village care about supporting each other and supporting their neighbourhood.

I urge all members to visit Wortley Village and experience it for themselves. It is diverse, accessible, participatory and inclusive. I want to recognize and thank the Wortley Village BIA and the Old South Community Organization for their efforts in making this award happen, and the Canadian Institute of Planners for recognizing London's hidden gem.

ROTARY CLUBS AUCTION

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I stand today to recognize the Rotary Clubs of Toronto's successful TV auction this past weekend, broadcast on Rogers TV across the GTA on Saturday night and all day Sunday. The auction was sponsored by five Rotary clubs in Toronto, including the Scarborough Twilight Club, from my riding of Scarborough—Guildwood.

On the Saturday evening of the auction, I had the pleasure of sitting at the anchor desk and hosting the auction. I was pleased to be joined by Penny Williams, a Rotarian in my riding of Scarborough—Guildwood.

The proceeds from the Rotary auction go toward community charities in Toronto such as the Scarborough youth services and Galloway arts in my riding of Scarborough—Guildwood. In fact, one of the charities

supported is the Future Aces Scholarship Foundation; I'm pleased to note that I was one of its first recipients while in high school in Scarborough.

The exact figures are still being calculated, but I'm happy to report that over \$100,000 has been raised for the Toronto community charities. Thank you to Rogers TV, all the generous donors and the five Rotary clubs for sponsoring this tremendous event. Our communities truly are better places because of your dedication to service and your generosity of spirit.

1510

HOME CARE

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I rise today to share a serious concern of my constituents who rely on the community care access centre for home care services when they've been released from hospital. I've been hearing from residents in Dufferin-Caledon who have experienced a significant decrease in the services that the CCAC provide, including services on the weekend. The problem is that now Dufferin-Caledon residents are struggling without the required care they should be receiving.

One Dufferin resident who recently contacted me was shocked that her home care hours were dramatically reduced, and the CCAC told her they would not be delivering services on the weekends. She was even told, "She would have to make do herself." Speaker, the notion that an individual who requires home care every day—Monday to Friday—can then somehow make do without home care on the weekend is nonsensical at best and downright shameful at worst. Does a wound not hurt on Saturday? Is a bath not needed on Sunday?

Who is making decisions about patient care, and when will this government step up and prioritize health care dollars, not on more administration and bureaucracy, but on front-line health care services like home care? We've all read too many stories in the newspaper about our health care's bloated bureaucracy, long wait-lists and home care services that fail to meet patient needs. People not receiving health care because it is the weekend would certainly qualify as failing to meet patient's needs.

The bottom line is that Dufferin-Caledon residents believe they deserve far better from their provincial government, and I completely agree with them.

FROMAGERIE ST-ALBERT

M. Grant Crack: Je suis fier de vous parler aujourd'hui d'une institution ontarienne et une icône locale dans ma circonscription de Glengarry-Prescott-Russell que vous connaissez tous : la fameuse Fromagerie St-Albert.

I'm very pleased to rise today in the House to talk about an Ontario institution and an icon in my riding of Glengarry-Prescott-Russell: la Fromagerie St-Albert, in beautiful St. Albert, Ontario.

As we all know, particularly from sampling their delicious cheeses at my annual Glengarry-Prescott-

Russell day here in the Legislature, Fromagerie St-Albert is a premier maker of delicious cheese made right here in Ontario. As early as the end of the 19th century, master cheese makers were already manufacturing a highly renowned cheddar, the St. Albert. Five generations of farmers and craftsmen have faithfully lived up to the St. Albert tradition of quality established by its founders in 1894.

La fromagerie a malheureusement été victime d'un feu en février dernier, un feu qui a tout détruit.

Sadly, however, earlier in the year, a devastating fire destroyed the factory. However, I'm happy to report that reconstruction is well under way. A new cheese plant, museum and restaurant will be built in St. Albert, replacing the old factory. Officials held a sod-turning ceremony with local residents, factory employees and firefighters to help announce the \$30-million new investment in the project. A total of 72,000-square-feet, the cheese plant will include state-of-the-art equipment and technology. Production is scheduled at the start of the summer of 2014.

Je suis extrêmement fier de la communauté de St-Albert qui s'est rassemblée et qui s'est soutenue dans ce moment difficile.

ROYAL AGRICULTURAL WINTER FAIR

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's the most wonderful time of the year. Now some of you might think I'm referring to Christmas, but today I'm specifically talking about when country comes to the city to recognize and celebrate the best of the best at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair. Today, I'd like to share with you some of the recent successes that the folks from my riding had at this past fair.

Speaker, these premier shows mean so much to so many, but specifically to the 4-H members. These shows give young community leaders a chance to shine; 4-H does an amazing job teaching young people the valuable life skills of public speaking, decision-making and how to be a valued member of the community.

I'd like to recognize the following: the Wawanosh club for winning the provincial Go for the Gold competition; Gary Finlay from Huron county, who won the Grand Champion Showperson rights at the TD Junior Sheep Show.

Renee Robinson from Huron county won the grand champion market animal and Stacey Robinson from Huron county won the reserve grand champion market animal in the Ontario Junior Barrow Show. Alyssa Cronin from Huron county won the Reserve Grand Champion Showperson at the Ontario Junior Barrow Show, and Ashton Colvin from Bruce county won Grand Champion Showperson at the Queen's Guineas competition.

Bruce county also placed first in the Herdsmen competition in the Queen's Guineas. Melissa MacIntyre had the Champion Limousin Heifer at the national beef heifer

show. And I'd be remiss, Speaker, if I didn't recognize the success in the open shows as well.

And congratulations to the Baird brothers of Turnberry township, when their horse Keenan was chosen as the senior champion stallion in the Clydesdale show.

Katie Falconer, from Teeswater, won reserve grand champion in the open Simmental show.

As you can see, Speaker, a lot of champions come from Huron—Bruce, and I congratulate them all.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure on a point of order.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, with your guidance—I missed introductions. My dear friend Kim Dier, who is a constituent, is coming down for a visit; she'll be here shortly. She's also the fiancée of Iain Myrans, my chief of staff. It's her first time in the Legislature, and I would like to welcome her.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PROMOTING EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS TAX CREDIT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT FAVORISANT LA RÉUSSITE SCOLAIRE

Mr. Leone moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 140, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement a promoting educational success tax credit / *Projet de loi 140, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour instaurer un crédit d'impôt favorisant la réussite scolaire.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Rob Leone: This is a bill designed to incent employees, by way of their employers, to obtain their high school diplomas. We know that higher educational attainment improves literacy, improves productivity, improves earnings and improves workplace safety. It also boosts educational attainment in children, and that's one of the things that I think this bill promises to do. It also fosters a culture of learning in the home, which is so very important.

INFRASTRUCTURE FOR JOBS AND PROSPERITY ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR L'INFRASTRUCTURE AU SERVICE DE L'EMPLOI ET DE LA PROSPÉRITÉ

Mr. Murray moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 141, An Act to enact the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, 2013 / *Projet de loi 141, Loi édictant la Loi de 2013 sur l'infrastructure au service de l'emploi et de la prospérité.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I'll make my statement under ministerial statements.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I rise today to introduce the proposed Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, 2013. The bill contains a series of principles, requirements and authorities that, if passed, would promote strategic infrastructure planning and investment in Ontario.

Our government is committed to building public infrastructure that creates jobs in a modern economy. That is why we have invested more than \$85 billion in public infrastructure since 2003. We recognize the needs of all Ontario communities and businesses and have committed to invest more than \$35 billion over the next three years, including about \$13.5 billion in this fiscal year alone. These infrastructure investments support jobs as we build new schools, new hospitals, new highways, new transit and so much more. This is consistent with Building Together, Ontario's first long-term infrastructure plan, which was released two years ago.

1520

Every dollar we spend must work hard for the people of this province. We must optimize the quality and location of each project we invest in to maximize growth within Ontario's economy.

This proposed act is about continuous improvement in strategic, evidence-based and long-term infrastructure planning. Put simply, this is a milestone opportunity to ensure that principled, long-term infrastructure planning is not just an ongoing priority but a legislative requirement. This means that every project our government invests in, whether in Toronto or Timmins, aligns with demographic, economic and environmental trends and the long-term needs of Ontarians.

On that note, promoting excellence in infrastructure design is a key component of the proposed bill. Better design of signature, government-owned transportation, arts, museum and heritage infrastructure projects can save money over time. This is money we can invest back in services that Ontarians need, like health care, education and transportation.

Moreover, the proposed legislation would require government to involve apprenticeships in the construction of

provincial infrastructure assets as part of our commitment to provide opportunities for young people. It would allow them to get both their registered trade and apprenticeship requirements completed.

According to the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, we will be creating, over the next three years, 1.3 million skilled jobs in Canada—about half of them here in Ontario, which is actually more than there are unemployed people in Ontario. To that end, we require apprenticeship positions to deal with these vacancies and keep our economy growing. Apprenticeships, skills and training, and youth employment are key parts of building a well-educated, highly skilled workforce.

With our eyes cast to the future, the province's long-term infrastructure plans would have to be at least 10 years' duration under the proposed act. Subject to the approval of the Legislature, the first plan would have to be tabled in this Legislature within three years and then every five years thereafter. This keeps our government transparent and assures Ontarians that we recognize the need for long-term and stable infrastructure funding.

Altogether, the proposed bill, if passed, would help to leverage the best possible economic, cultural and environmental outcomes from the province's infrastructure investments.

Just concluding, I'd like to pay a bit of tribute to two people whom I have admired as great city builders, to whom I think this act is dedicated, and they come from the history of Ontario—where we'd like to get back. One was R.C. Harris, who's famous for the Prince Edward Viaduct, which you may know as the Bloor viaduct, and for the Harris treatment plant. It was the last time we did integrated transportation planning, where we actually built our subways—we planned a subway 100 years ago. That passed a referendum in 1913, and they planned for a subway platform which was built. It wasn't until 1966—over 50 years later—that the subway was there.

This is what we want to get back to. We don't want to widen highways to be 25 lanes wide. We want to get back to integrated transportation and land use planning, and we need the evidence to do it.

Mr. Harris also introduced innovation. Today, we go to Singapore to see Canadian water technology demonstrated in a water treatment plant. The Harris plant here was open to the public so that businesses and people who wanted to invest could see state-of-the-art Canadian technologies.

We also know that we've got to get the \$13 billion or \$14 billion that we're spending on infrastructure working not just to leave hospitals, bridges and clean water systems in each of our communities but to leave a legacy of skilled jobs behind. We think this will be a huge accelerator for apprenticeships and employment for young people who have been left out of the economy.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, to Edmund Burke—not the philosopher but the great Canadian architect who introduced curtain walls to Canada on the Simpsons building, who actually is the architect and designer, with Thomas Taylor, of this great bridge of the viaduct. It was the first

time that engineers and architects had collaborated on such major skill sets and brought designers into it.

So we're going back to something that is a very Ontario notion: Reintroducing architects and designers to save money, improve design and give us infrastructure, bridges and public spaces equal to Paris, London, Chicago or any of the small or large cities around the world.

Mr. Speaker, it's a great pleasure. I want to thank my critics as well for their indulgence and for their thoughtfulness in the comments that they've already given to me privately, and I look forward to both of their interventions.

God bless, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

NATIONAL HOUSING DAY

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to make a statement on behalf of the Honourable Linda Jeffrey, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, on National Housing Day, which occurred last Friday, on November 22. The minister, unfortunately, has been delayed, and I would like to make this statement on her behalf, which I believe to be within the rules of practice.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is.

Hon. John Gerretsen: It gives me great pleasure to address the Legislature to mark National Housing Day, which took place this past Friday, on November 22.

National Housing Day recognizes the important and meaningful steps that we have taken to develop social and affordable housing in Canada and here in Ontario. It's a day to celebrate our successes and the real positive change we can make in our communities, and while it's an ongoing challenge to ensure that every person and family, from our children to our elders, has a safe place to call home, it's a challenge I know we're all determined to take on in this House.

Today, I want to draw attention to an urgent issue that affects all of us. Social housing projects across our province are at risk of losing their federal funding. I want to make a clear distinction between the two streams of funding that Ottawa provides for social and affordable housing.

One of the pots of money is called the Investment in Affordable Housing for Ontario Program. Those funds go directly towards building and repairing affordable housing units and provide rental and down payment assistance to households in need.

But here is what worries the minister and myself, and as a former Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and a former chairman of the Ontario Housing Corp., I know of what we're speaking about here: There is another and larger stream of money from the federal government that currently goes towards the operating costs of existing social housing. In a very practical sense, these funds enable residents to pay their rent on a rent-geared-to-income basis, and if the federal government in Ottawa doesn't change its course, those subsidies are scheduled

to evaporate, because these housing units have been around for so long.

Over a quarter of a billion dollars of federal social housing funding to Ontario will disappear over the next 10 years. That's more than a 50% reduction in funding. Indeed, some subsidies have already expired. In those buildings, the mortgages have been paid off, but the maintenance costs never go away. As a matter of fact, as the housing gets older, the maintenance cost gets higher.

The loss of these subsidies is taking a toll on social housing providers, on families and obviously on the communities in which they are located across Ontario. That's why it's so distressing to me and to the minister that despite this pressing need, the minister's invitation to Minister Jason Kenney to sit down and deal with this important issue has gone unanswered.

People living in social housing need to know that the people they elect are looking out for them. Our government listens to this call, which is why our funding commitment of nearly \$3 billion is the largest affordable housing program in the province's history, but for the sake of Canada's economic stability and growth, now more than ever we need a national housing plan—many, many organizations have called for this, including the provincial government—one that includes the creation of new affordable housing opportunities and one that maintains our existing social housing projects.

Affordable housing is an essential component of a strong overall housing market that creates jobs, grows the economy and provides good housing for those who need it in our country and province. That's why we're urging the federal government to return to the table as a long-term housing partner.

Interjection.

Hon. John Gerretsen: It's not just the provinces and territories that are voicing their concern. Earlier this fall, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities took a stand and issued a statement calling for a long-term federal commitment to housing, and just last week, the city of Toronto brought its Close the Housing Gap campaign to Parliament Hill, calling for new long-term funding available for social and affordable housing.

It's a joint responsibility between the province and the federal government, as the member opposite well knows.

In honour of National Housing Day, I want to reaffirm this government's commitment to work together to provide long-term, predictable funding for social and affordable housing that works for the people of Ontario and Canada. I invite all members in this House to join me in calling on the federal government to stop walking away from Canada's most vulnerable residents. There is no better time than the present to act; so says the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

1530

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

Mr. Frank Klees: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the member from Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: Given the importance of the subject matter before us and given the fact that the government has allocated some 15 minutes for making the statement, I would ask for unanimous consent that each of our critics on these two files be given a minimum of five minutes for their response.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll wait for attention. The member from Newmarket–Aurora is seeking unanimous consent to extend the time to five minutes per member for each of the topics. Do we agree? I heard a no.

INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING

Mr. Frank Klees: That's very disappointing, but we'll have to find some other way to express our opinions on this bill.

I will start by saying this: Certainly we welcome the principle behind what the Minister of Infrastructure is proposing, that there be long-term plans. What is absolutely beyond my comprehension is that it will take three years before we get a 10-year plan from this government. I'm not sure what they have planned for the next three years, but I would have thought that over the last 10 years they would have had some time to put in place a 10-year plan. Apparently it will take them some three years to come up with that. I would also like to see a 10-year plan or a plan of any kind to balance the budget of this province, which we're also not hearing from this government.

I'd like to speak specifically to what, again, I agree, in principle, is the right thing to do, and that is to ensure that the decisions about infrastructure projects are based on transparent information. In the bill, I see that there will be four conditions that are proposed: an inventory of the infrastructure, an evaluation of the infrastructure, the age of the infrastructure assets and the condition of those infrastructure assets—all critical.

What is missing in this bill, however, is any reference to an asset management program. If we're going to have the information that the minister refers to in this bill, what we need is a formalized asset management program that will not simply be an option for either the province or the municipalities, but would be mandatory. Until such time as we get to the point where we have a mandatory asset management program so that we know what the inventory and what the condition of our various infrastructure assets are, we'll never get to the point of being able to make proper decisions about investment in inventory. I defer to my colleague.

NATIONAL HOUSING DAY

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's a pleasure to respond to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing on the occasion of National Housing Day, which was celebrated across Canada last Friday.

It is easy at times to take our home for granted. A stable place to call home provides a family with better

prospects and improved hope for what tomorrow may bring. Access to housing in Ontario, especially in rapidly growing areas such as the GTA, is becoming an issue. The price inflation that comes with a rapidly growing municipality has caused both prices and rents to increase. According to many measures, a family's rent is considered unaffordable if it exceeds 30% of their monthly take-home pay.

In downtown Toronto and areas well served by transit, this figure is easily exceeded for families on low-income, social assistance recipients and pensioners. Many homeowners are finding it difficult to retain their ownership and the independence that it brings. The tax burden and the cost of energy are forcing them into the trade-offs that we see in this province. Every week, I see people in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, in my office or on the phone, especially seniors on fixed incomes, saying that they are faced each week with deciding whether they should be paying for groceries or paying their hydro bill.

So what can we do as legislators? Building new units must be cheaper and faster. Renting must be easier and disputes resolved more swiftly. Alternative housing arrangements, such as co-op housing, must be encouraged. Maintenance of both rented and owned properties must be easier to access, and cheaper. The burden of taxes, fees and energy costs must decrease.

In addition, we cannot lose sight of the fact that downtown areas in growing cities will generally become more expensive, but low-income families cannot be denied access to the economic opportunities that cities' development brings. Efficient and present transit allows all residents, including the cheaper suburbs, to benefit from the economic opportunities that will come our way once the province regains its competitiveness.

Good housing can only stem from good policy. The Ontario PC caucus will continue to work to that end.

INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'll rise today to offer some initial comments about the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, announced by Minister Murray earlier today at some site off-campus, somewhere in downtown Toronto, rather than in the House.

We know that our province, our cities and our towns need to address the infrastructure deficit, estimated at more than \$100 billion. An alarming 60% of what needs to be repaired or replaced is more than 50 years old.

New Democrats support the building of infrastructure in this province. When we heard that legislation was forthcoming, we had high hopes that the issues that had been raised by construction groups across the province would be addressed.

I was in Sudbury yesterday, meeting with the mayor and different community leaders up there about their infrastructure needs: roads, sewers, bridges, culverts, the Ring of Fire—you name it. The list goes on and on up there. They were hoping for some long-term sustainable infrastructure funding, but I haven't found that in there yet.

New Democrats welcome the provision for increased use of apprentices, but other than that, we really don't see a response to what the construction industry is telling us is a badly flawed model for building infrastructure. For example, at a time when foreign global companies are increasingly winning huge construction contracts, there are no requirements that I've seen yet spelled out for increased Ontario content. At a time when regular building inspections are being replaced by a hidden warranty system, there's no mention of remedying the safety problem.

Perhaps more bewildering, why mandate a 10-year plan for infrastructure when there is no legislative oversight of the plan, nor any sanctions built into the legislation if the government fails to follow through on the plan? We're a little bit skeptical on this side of the House. We're hoping for a good explanation from this government during second reading as to what this is all about.

I have to tell you, I had a little bit of a briefing earlier today on this. It was more like hide-and-seek, show-and-tell. I had a young staffer tell me—not showing me anything; he couldn't do that until the minister spoke—about paragraph 8 in section 3, and whether it would apply or not. I'm glad we've seen a little bit of this, but as far as transparency, I want to see a whole lot more.

NATIONAL HOUSING DAY

Ms. Cindy Forster: National Housing Day is an important reminder to all of us of the role that a safe and affordable place to live plays in eliminating the cycle of poverty. As Ontario's need for affordable housing grows, we need to ensure that we have a plan in place to provide adequate housing for people in this province.

When we look at the government's record on affordable housing, it's clear that they've failed to address this pressing need. It's been 10 years since they were elected, and we still see the waiting list hitting records that are really high: 158,000 households in this province are on the wait-list—in Niagara alone, 5,700, and in Toronto, a staggering 90,000 households.

1540

These numbers come at a time when the federal government has pledged to work with provincial governments in a fund-matching program, called the affordable housing program, that would have some impact in addressing this pressing need. However, it's been eight months, and the province and the feds still haven't been able to get a meeting together. At stake is \$253 million per year to be matched by the provinces or the territories, bringing the total to \$506 million per year over each of five years. Why isn't the government making it a priority to meet with their federal counterparts and to lock down this much-needed funding?

Our caucus recently met with the Campaign 2000 group, focused on eradicating poverty for our children here in the province. One of the recommendations was that we move forward with working with the Canadian

government on this program, because one in seven kids in this province is living in poverty, and they see it as a down payment towards a national housing strategy. It's necessary if we're going to kind of reduce that trend of cutting funding to affordable housing.

Unfortunately, we see here in the government of Ontario that the housing issue is not a priority. My colleagues and I have come forward with a number of pieces of legislation, like inclusionary zoning, a way for municipalities to make sure that new developments include a certain percentage of affordable housing. I also came forward with a bill in the last session for rent control on all rental buildings across this province. However, the government isn't acting on either of those, either.

I hope that National Housing Day reminds the government of this pressing issue of the need for more affordable housing in the province, and that it brings forward some legislation to put a plan in place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

PETITIONS

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. John O'Toole: This morning I asked a question on this very issue. It's a coincidence I have a petition on it as well.

"Whereas Hydro One Networks Inc. (Hydro One) is proposing construction of a new transformer station on a 100-acre site in Clarington, near the Oshawa-Clarington boundary"—and Mr. Speaker, this site is on the Oak Ridges moraine;

"Whereas concerns have been raised about the environmental impacts of this development, including harm to wildlife as well as contamination of ponds, streams and the underground water supply;

"Whereas sites zoned for industrial and/or commercial use are the best locations for large electricity transformer stations;

"Whereas most, if not all, residents do not agree this project is needed and that, if proven to be necessary, it could be best accommodated at alternative locations such as Cherrywood or Wesleyville;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Ontario Legislature support the preservation of the Oak Ridges moraine, the greenbelt and the natural environment at this site. We also ask that the Ontario Legislature require the Clarington transformer station to be built at an alternative location zoned for an industrial facility and selected in accordance with the best planning principles."

I'm pleased to sign and support this, and present it to William, one of the pages in their last few days here.

MINIMUM WAGE

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to present my very first petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario's minimum wage has been frozen at \$10.25 an hour since 2010, and some workers earn even less due to current exemptions in the Employment Standards Act; and

"Whereas full-time minimum wage workers are living at nearly 20% below the poverty line as measured by the Ontario government's low-income measure (LIM); and

"Whereas minimum wage should, as a matter of principle, bring people working 35 hours per week above the poverty line; and

"Whereas an immediate increase in the minimum wage to \$14 per hour would bring workers' wages 10% above the LIM poverty line; and

"Whereas raising the minimum wage will benefit workers, local businesses and the economy by putting money in workers' pockets to spend in their local community;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately increase the minimum wage to \$14 per hour for all workers and thereafter increase it annually by no less than the cost of living."

I affix my signature to this petition and give it to page Cynthia to deliver to the table.

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas small businesses not only employ thousands of Ontarians with well-paying jobs, they also play a vital role strengthening Ontario's economy; and

"Whereas providing tax relief to small and local businesses strengthens the economy and creates a business climate that attracts investment and helps create jobs; and

"Whereas the government has taken several other initiatives to making Ontario the most attractive place to do business in North America;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 105, Supporting Small Businesses Act, 2013, introduced on September 24, 2013, by the Ontario Minister of Finance."

I fully support the petition, Mr. Speaker, and I will give the petition to page Julia.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Green Energy Act has driven up the cost of electricity in Ontario due to unrealistic subsidies for certain energy sources, including the world's highest subsidies for solar power; and

"Whereas this cost is passed on to ratepayers through the global adjustment, which can account for almost half of a ratepayer's hydro bill; and

"Whereas the high cost of energy is severely impacting the quality of life of Ontario's residents, especially fixed-income seniors; and

"Whereas it is imperative to remedy Liberal mismanagement in the energy sector by implementing immediate reforms detailed in the Ontario PC white paper *Paths to Prosperity—Affordable Energy*;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately repeal the Green Energy Act, 2009, and all other statutes that artificially inflate the cost of electricity with the aim of bringing down electricity rates and eliminating expensive surcharges such as the global adjustment and debt retirement charges."

I certainly agree with this petition and will be passing it off to page Payton.

WASTE REDUCTION

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: "Whereas protecting the environment should be everyone's responsibility, including manufacturing and material producing companies; and

"Whereas it is important to require producers to be financially and environmentally responsible for recycling the goods and packaging they sell in Ontario, and to divert these wastes from landfill to recycling to drive innovation, generate new jobs, and new Ontario-made products; and

"Whereas new approaches are needed that reflect ideas and recommendations from the recycling sector that are designed to improve current recycling systems, to increase recycling and diversion rates, and better protect our environment;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act, 2013, introduced on June 6, 2013, by the Ontario Minister of Environment."

I will sign this petition and give it to page Sarah.

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Rick Nicholls: "Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn's, Alzheimer's, arthritic diabetes, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Canada, but scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe;

"Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of their professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario health insurance plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process of establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize testing

procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives at 45% to 95% of the time;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health to direct that the Ontario public health system and OHIP include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme diagnosis, to do everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed diagnostic and successful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians."

I approve of this petition. I will sign my name to it and give it to page Cynthia.

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'd like to present a petition. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's minimum wage has been frozen at \$10.25 an hour since 2010, and some workers earn even less due to current exemptions in the Employment Standards Act; and

"Whereas full-time minimum wage workers are living at nearly 20% below the poverty line as measured by the Ontario government's low-income measure (LIM); and

"Whereas minimum wage should, as a matter of principle, bring people working 35 hours per week above the poverty line; and

"Whereas an immediate increase in the minimum wage to \$14 per hour would bring workers' wages 10% above the LIM poverty line; and

"Whereas raising the minimum wage will benefit workers, local businesses and the economy by putting money in workers' pockets to spend in their local community;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately increase the minimum wage to \$14 per hour for all workers and thereafter increase it annually by no less than the cost of living."

I agree with this petition. I will affix my name and hand it to page Jeffrey.

1550

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Grant Crack: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas there is an evident shortage of long-term-care beds in the region, all facilities have long waiting lists;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Demand the establishment of a long-term-care facility within the urban area of the city of Clarence-Rockland."

I agree with this petition. I will sign it and give it to page Marina.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Health Canada approved Esbriet in October 2012 for individuals with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF);

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has declined to list Esbriet on the Ontario drug benefit formulary or reimburse patients through the Exceptional Access Program;

"Whereas Esbriet is the first of its kind to be approved in Canada for the treatment of IPF and will slow the progression of this fatal disease;

"Whereas the high cost of Esbriet is creating financial hardships for many individuals and their families. Only those patients who have access to a private drug plan can afford the cost of this medication, forcing some patients to go without treatment;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To review and reconsider the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's decision to decline any assistance with Esbriet and consider some form of assistance with the cost of this medication in order to improve the lives of Ontarians with IPF and decrease the cost on the health care system associated with the disease."

I agree with this petition and affix my signature to it.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean Program was implemented as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and vehicle emissions have declined significantly from 1998 to 2010; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

"Whereas from 1999 to 2010 the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and

"Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program."

I agree with this and will be passing it off to page Morgan.

WASTE REDUCTION

Mr. John Fraser: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas protecting the environment should be everyone's responsibility, including manufacturing and material producing companies; and

"Whereas it is important to require producers to be financially and environmentally responsible for recycling the goods and packaging they sell in Ontario, and to divert these wastes from landfill to recycling to drive innovation, generate new jobs, and new Ontario-made products; and

"Whereas new approaches are needed that reflect ideas and recommendations from the recycling sector that are designed to improve current recycling systems, to increase recycling and diversion rates, and better protect our environment;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act, 2013, introduced on June 6, 2013, by the Ontario Minister of the Environment."

I agree with this petition. I'm affixing my signature and handing it to page Payton.

DARLINGTON NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the economic benefit of the retained nuclear scenario is \$60 billion. Eliminating the wind options in the long-term energy plan (LTEP) will have a positive economic benefit of \$21 billion. Forgoing the nuclear option in the LTEP will have an economic loss of \$38 billion;

"Whereas future economic growth of the Durham region heavily relies on the new build;

"Whereas it was Premier Wynne who cancelled the new build at Darlington, costing Ontario 20,000 direct and indirect jobs associated with the new build;

"Whereas this limits employment opportunities of university graduates like those from UOIT;

"Whereas in addition to refurbishing the four existing reactors at Darlington the building of new capacity is important for the future of Ontario's manufacturing sector and for jobs and investment in our Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the provincial government confirms their commitment to the refurbishment of all four units at the Darlington generating station and that the Ontario government reinstates the original plan for the completion of two new reactors at the Darlington generating station."

I'm pleased to sign and support this and present it to Arvind, one of the pages.

WASTE REDUCTION

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly that reads as follows:

“Whereas protecting the environment should be everyone’s responsibility, including manufacturing and material producing companies; and

“Whereas it is important to require producers to be financially and environmentally responsible for recycling the goods and packaging they sell in Ontario, and to divert these wastes from landfill to recycling to drive innovation, generate new jobs, and new Ontario-made products; and

“Whereas new approaches are needed that reflect ideas and recommendations from the recycling sector that are designed to improve current recycling systems, to increase recycling and diversion rates, and better protect our environment;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act, 2013, introduced on June 6, 2013, by the Ontario Minister of Environment.”

Speaker, I agree with this, will sign it and send it down with Michaela.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRONGER PROTECTION FOR ONTARIO CONSUMERS ACT, 2013 LOI DE 2013 RENFORÇANT LA PROTECTION DU CONSOMMATEUR ONTARIEN

Ms. MacCharles moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 55, An Act to amend the Collection Agencies Act, the Consumer Protection Act, 2002 and the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 55, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les agences de recouvrement, la Loi de 2002 sur la protection du consommateur et la Loi de 2002 sur le courtage commercial et immobilier et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.*

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The minister has the floor.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: On April 18 of this year, I rose in the House to introduce legislation to protect and strengthen the rights of Ontario consumers in four key areas.

Before I go ahead with my remarks, Speaker, I would like to introduce someone who’s here in the gallery. Her name is Jessie Weel, and she’s one of the policy advisers from the Ministry of Consumer Services who worked very hard on Bill 55. Welcome. It’s nice to have you here this afternoon in the Legislature.

The Stronger Protection for Ontario Consumers Act, 2013, would, if passed:

—strengthen consumer rights against aggressive, high-pressure door-to-door sales tactics for water heater rentals;

—create new standards of conduct for providers of debt settlement services and protect vulnerable consumers from misleading and unfair practices;

—provide safeguards to homebuyers by strengthening the integrity of real estate bidding practices by increasing transparency in multiple-offer situations; and

—finally, offer more power to home sellers to negotiate flexible, lower-cost arrangements when using a real estate professional’s services.

Overall, Speaker, our government is committed to helping Ontarians in their everyday lives by strengthening consumer protection and ensuring that Ontario’s marketplace is fair and transparent, and that consumer confidence is strong.

1600

I’m proud to rise again today in the House to begin third reading debate on this important piece of legislation. It aims to empower consumers by strengthening consumer rights, requiring suppliers to give consumers the information they need to make the best decisions for their needs and budgets, and helping us all remove the pressure we feel as consumers when making big-ticket purchases.

Bill 55, if passed, would have a widespread, positive impact on the day-to-day lives of millions of people in our province, Speaker. Whether you’re dealing with aggressive door-to-door sales tactics used by someone to sell you a water heater rental contract or you’re in need of help to settle debts or you’re buying or selling a home, this bill, if passed, will be a big win for consumers. It bears repeating that this bill, if passed, will provide more rights and more protection for consumers. This bill would also promote more openness and transparency, helping build consumer confidence when entering into deals in these sectors.

Let me first talk about the recent committee process, Speaker. Over the past five weeks, the bill was discussed by my honourable colleagues and members of the House in the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly. Stakeholders and members of the public were also offered an opportunity to present their views and comment about the bill, and indeed they did so in large numbers. The committee heard from more than a dozen interested parties, who shared valuable insights and information about the bill. They discussed how Bill 55, if passed, would help consumers in Ontario be better informed in these areas. It would help these consumers know their rights and obligations when dealing with water heater rentals at their front door, when securing debt settlement services, or when buying or selling a house.

We also heard how we could improve on this proposed legislation, and that, of course, is indeed what a committee is for. We listened and the committee listened. As a result of the valuable feedback at committee, coupled with further input from my ministry—the Ministry of Consumer Services—and from stakeholders and the public over the past many months, the committee made a number of amendments to the draft Stronger Protection for Ontario Consumers Act, 2013, to provide

further clarity and better protect the consumers of our province.

Those amendments clarify further that when a water heater supplier violates the no-installation rule within the 20-day cooling-off period, the consumer would be protected against a claim by the original supplier for all costs that the consumer incurs in connection with the installation of the water heater, including the removal or return of the original water heater. This is an important point because the new 20-day extended cooling-off period for door-to-door water heater rentals is a key feature of the bill. With this amendment, the consumer is even better protected.

Other amendments made at committee also ensure that consumers would receive the information they require to better understand their debt settlement service agreements and the effect those arrangements may have on their credit rating. These amendments mean that credit counsellors would have to disclose information to the consumer about how the organization is funded, with regulations to be considered to set out more details.

Further amendments made at committee mean that real estate professionals could have the option to retain copies of all written offers involved in a real estate transaction or other documents related to that offer, such as maintaining a summary document of all offers. This would increase flexibility and reduce administrative burden for our real estate professionals in this province.

These amendments not only help to meet our objective of stronger consumer protection but are also responsive to some industry concerns that were raised during the hearings.

While I realize that this was, indeed, a complicated, technical bill, I would like to thank all the committee members for their hard work and thoughtful consideration in improving this bill, and I also want to thank my ministry for their very hard work on this bill as well.

I understand that there were many more ideas at the table to further strengthen this bill, and I look forward to working with members, industries and others, if this passes, in the regulatory process.

Looking at our proposed bill, it does aim to safeguard and strengthen the consumer rights of the people of Ontario in the sectors of door-to-door sales, debt settlement services and real estate.

So far this year, the Ontario government has received more than 2,240 complaints and inquiries about water heater sales, including those made door to door. This issue has consistently ranked as one of the top 10 complaints my ministry has received over the past three years. Every week, we hear about how homeowners have been duped by aggressive sales tactics at their own door when dealing with water heater rentals, and we read about them all the time in the media.

Of course, we know that most water heater companies do not conduct themselves in this way—let's be clear about that. But we're talking about the few organizations within the industry that can be identified as bad actors in this marketplace and that bring a bad name, quite frankly, to all the other reputable businesses.

The high-pressure salespeople we are talking about today take aim at seniors and newcomers to our province, people who may be particularly vulnerable to misleading sales tactics, and who may have a hard time understanding the contracts they are being offered.

We've even heard about some salespersons falsely claiming to be representatives of other legitimate organizations, and who have gone so far as to claim that they are from the government. That's kind of a funny one, when they come to my door and claim they're from the government. Then I tell them what my job is; needless to say, they don't stay long at my doorstep.

Our Liberal government feels it's important to protect Ontario consumers from these abusive and unscrupulous door-to-door sales tactics. The people of this province themselves also want greater protection. A recent Angus Reid survey of Ontario homeowners found that 57% felt pressured into making a purchase or signing a contract for goods or services when approached at the door, and 35% of those Ontarians who made a purchase say they ended up regretting that they had done so.

Bill 55 proposes to increase protection to Ontario consumers by doing a number of things, Speaker. First, it doubles the existing 10-day cooling-off period to 20 days for water heaters, providing consumers with more time to consider their decision. This is a very key feature of our bill. Secondly, it bans delivery and installation of water heaters during that new 20-day cooling-off period. Finally, it allows rules requiring companies to confirm their sales by making scripted and recorded telephone calls to customers within that 20-day cooling-off period.

As I mentioned earlier, an amendment brought forward in committee and supported by members would provide new consumer rights when the rules are not followed, such as requiring the original supplier to pay all costs and cancellation fees that a consumer incurs when the 20-day cooling-off period is not observed. This would mean that a consumer is protected, for example, against all costs they incur from suppliers for the removal or return of goods. This also means that a consumer could simply cancel a contract within 20 days if they have concerns, or if they change their mind, before the water heater is even installed. Consumers would not need to feel that they have been coerced or pressured into a new rental.

It's worth noting that all disclosures that would be required under the bill would need to be made in clear, easy-to-understand language, which is actually already required by the Consumer Protection Act of Ontario.

Looking at debt settlement services, we are aware that some companies that provide this service offer to dramatically reduce a person's debt. They promise to do so by negotiating with a person's creditors—provided the consumer, of course, pays upfront fees. Some companies offering debt settlement services charge high, upfront administrative fees and may not deliver on their promised services. For some consumers in financial difficulty, this situation can force them into even more debt. It can be devastating for consumers who are already in a difficult

situation. Some companies may also hide contract clauses that reduce or eliminate the value of the original services offered.

To protect consumers against the misleading practices of some debt settlement services, Bill 55 proposes to prohibit the payment of upfront fees before those services are provided, and to limit the amount of fees charged overall. We will be working with the industry to set these limits by regulation.

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Contracts would need to be clear and easy to understand. As well, an amendment was added at committee and supported by members that would require consumers receive the information they need, which is a clear and detailed explanation to understand the effect of debt settlement agreements and what those impacts may have on their credit rating.

Bill 55 would also allow consumers to cancel their contract, without having to state a reason, within 10 days after receiving a copy of the agreement. Our government is implementing a cooling-off period to an industry that did not have one in Ontario prior to Bill 55. This would give consumers more time for second thought before committing thousands of dollars to this possibly risky solution.

Misleading sales practices and advertising related to debt settlement services would also be prohibited under this bill. We've all seen and heard ads on TV and radio saying they can cut your debt by 50%, 60% or 70%. "Pay only pennies on the dollar," they say. If those claims are really true, then companies, of course, will be allowed to make them.

Finally, our new legislation, if passed, would require credit counsellors to disclose information to consumers about the funding their organizations receive.

If companies that offer debt settlement services fail to follow these rules, our new legislation, if passed, would enable their mandatory licences to be revoked, meaning they cannot legally conduct business in Ontario.

Now, to talk about the last key area of the Stronger Protection for Ontario Consumers Act, and that's the real estate sector. Ontario's real estate professionals, I think we can all agree, are among the best, and we have confidence in the effective role that the Real Estate Council of Ontario plays in regulating this sector.

Homebuyers rely on information about bids that come from the real estate professionals themselves, particularly in multiple offer situations. That means that these buyers need to be sure about the true nature of the offers that are coming in or, indeed, if an offer has really come in at all. This makes the competitive nature of bidding on a home all the more stressful, as anyone who's ever been part of it can attest. Adding to the pressure is the fact that for most of us, a home is easily the most expensive thing we will ever purchase.

Bill 55 proposes a solution to this problem of transparency. It would require real estate persons and brokers acting on behalf of a buyer to only present offers that are in writing. Salespeople and brokers would also be pro-

hibited from suggesting or claiming that a written offer exists, if that is false.

Bill 55 would also allow any person who's made a written offer to purchase a particular home to ask the registrar of the Real Estate Council of Ontario to work with their seller's brokerage to determine the number of written offers that were received and to report that number.

Real estate professionals would be required to retain a copy of the summary of all written offers involved in a real estate transaction. To increase flexibility and reduce the administrative burden for real estate professionals, a new amendment would allow for an option to keep other documents related to an offer: for example, a summary document of all written offers or all the offers themselves.

It's important to state that falsifying information or documents related to real estate is already an offence under the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002. The proposed reforms would enhance the Real Estate Council of Ontario's ability to inquire into all claims of false offers, making it easier to understand and to take action when needed.

We have worked with the Ontario Real Estate Association in putting forward this change. Our Liberal government is committed to balancing industry concerns with consumer protection wherever possible.

In summary, the bill would, if passed, maintain public confidence in real estate transactions when multiple bids on the same property are involved.

As well, Bill 55 would, if passed, give homebuyers and sellers more power to negotiate lower-cost services by removing the ban on charging both fees and commissions. By allowing real estate agents to customize their fees and commissions based on the services that the consumer really wants, rather than paying for a full package of services, the market would be better served. Consumers would have greater flexibility in how they spend their money, by tailoring the costs with the services they want.

These options also have the potential to unleash innovation and creativity in the sector. We are certainly seeing other sectors going in the same direction, where consumers have the right to pick and choose the services or goods that they want to buy. This change will make Ontario's real estate marketplace consistent with all other provinces in Canada, while responding to recommendations from the Competition Bureau.

In conclusion, we believe that Bill 55 will indeed build on the steps our government continues to take to strengthen consumer protection for the people of Ontario. The government has a responsibility to Ontario consumers and their families to ensure that consumers understand their rights and businesses understand their responsibilities. Bill 55 is designed to make our marketplace fair, safe and one where all people in this province can shop with confidence. If passed, Bill 55 will help Ontario consumers be informed when purchasing big-ticket items and feel confident about the choices they've made. All of

these measures would strengthen consumer protection and help people in their everyday lives. This promotes a fair and transparent marketplace, where Ontario families and individuals can make informed choices, spend wisely and protect their hard-earned money.

I call on this House, Speaker, to support the bill so that Ontario residents can get the protection they want and deserve.

Again, I want to thank my honourable colleagues on the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly for their thoughtful consideration in improving this bill and the work of my ministry; it is stronger for it.

In the end, we want to help Ontario families and individuals—all consumers—to be comfortable and confident when they're buying goods and services in this province, including when they are dealing with water heater rental decisions, when buying or selling their homes or using debt settlement service companies. We want to help people in this province to make informed choices, to spend wisely and protect their hard-earned money. Those confident consumers will ultimately help strengthen the economy of this great province.

We have a plan to increase consumer protection, and our plan is working.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I am pleased to rise and offer my comments on Bill 55 as it comes before us at third reading.

I will begin by reminding this House that the PC caucus has always been at the forefront of consumer protection, and the current framework for consumers to know and exercise their rights was laid out by our leader, Tim Hudak, during his tenure as minister of consumer services.

Over the years, the consumer market in Ontario has evolved to include new products, such as new kinds of agreements and, obviously, new challenges.

The one truly efficient means of ensuring consumers do not fall for high-pressure sales tactics, of course, is a comprehensive consumer education effort.

Back in 2009, the Ontario Auditor General highlighted how the Ontario Ministry of Consumer Services was not doing enough to make Ontarians aware of their consumer rights and the means they had to resolve complaints.

Let us be absolutely clear: No amount of legislation and regulation will eliminate all the bad players from the market. Those who contravene the spirit of the law today are likely to contravene the letter of the law tomorrow. You cannot legislate an honest market into existence; you can only help create the conditions for it to develop.

The ministry continues to rely on consumers being proactive and reading through its website. Although informed consumers should do so, it is still the ministry's duty to get the message out, and they aren't doing it.

So here we come to Bill 55. During the second reading debate, we remarked that, as written, schedule 1 did nothing to stop collection calls once a consumer hired a debt settlement agency. Being in debt, especially when

those debts turn bad, is a stressful situation for consumers, and we would have liked to see a provision that would have reduced that stress, but the government stubbornly refused.

Many debt settlement companies operate cleanly and transparently with regular Ontario licences and codes and good practices. However, unscrupulous fly-by-night operators can base their operations and accounts outside of Ontario, including using foreign call centres. Without a truly informed consumer marketplace, an Ontario consumer might not know the difference. In this optic, the government's approach and sound bites have had the unintended consequence of lulling the consumer into a false sense of safety.

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The market for debt settlement services needs to be transparent and honest. Compared to many other options, such as bankruptcy, debt settlement is a finer tool with which to rebuild one's life. However, because of the nature of the business, the same legal framework and protections for bankruptcy do not apply to debt settlers. This is, of course, a concern that remains unaddressed.

The top complaint for the Ministry of Consumer Services is collection agencies, independent businesses that usually buy debt from other credit holders at a fraction of the cost and then chase the consumer for payment. Alternatively, they can collect a fee from the creditor once the debt begins getting repaid.

Speaker, the first thing a consumer-first government would do is get the collectors off the consumer's back once they have resorted to a settlement. Unfortunately, this isn't in Bill 55.

We filed an amendment to make this happen, and the government refused. In Bill 55, the charging of any fee before a settlement is reached is banned. This is a simplistic and superficial provision. The unintended result will be to drive the debt settlement industry out of business.

Bill 55 gives the creditors unlimited power over the consumer and the settler. As long as they can hold tight, refuse all settlement offers and continue to pester the consumer, they will starve the debt settlement industry of funds and force them out of business. Sadly, this is a common theme of this government.

The government placed a provision that allows them to issue regulations describing what can and cannot be charged upfront. We offered an amendment that would have clarified this and cast it in stone in the legislation: Charge only an initial fee, not proportional to the consumer's debt load, and a negotiation fee, neither of which can exceed a prescribed amount. The government refused.

We believe that no one should work for free, and the right to be compensated for your labours is not to be given by any government. People and businesses are born with it. Bill 55 flies in the face of that principle, and the Liberals refuse to correct the flaw.

Overall, schedule 1 is a baby step in the regulation of debt settlement services, but it does not reduce the stress,

nor can it protect against fly-by-night settlers. This can only be done by a consistent ministry effort to educate Ontario consumers.

Schedule 1 comes into force by proclamation, and before it is proclaimed, I hope the government will correct these mistakes.

Schedule 2 is designed to deal with a situation peculiar to Ontario. We are the only jurisdiction where most hot water heaters are rented from legacy providers rather than purchased outright. Water heater providers range from reputable and consumer-friendly to outright fraudsters. My constituents in Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry often complain about persistent door-to-door salesmen, who often misrepresent themselves as TSSA or energy board employees, make safety judgments they are not allowed to issue, and coax consumers into contracts.

The current framework for consumer agreements recognizes three agreements. Direct agreements are entered into face-to-face, remote agreements are entered into by other means, such as by telephone or by mail, and Internet agreements are self-explanatory.

The government has taken a very restrictive view of the problem and in doing so has left a gaping loophole in the legislation. As it is written, the added consumer protections granted by schedule 2 will only apply to those agreements signed at the door. They will not apply to agreements entered into over the phone or by mail or over the Internet. Bad players who commit the criminal act of misrepresentation will not hesitate to use the power of mail, the phone or Internet marketing to target consumers.

The PC caucus offered an amendment that would have ratified the situation by making the added protection apply to all agreements related to the rental of hot water heaters, nipping the bad phone and Internet telemarketers in the bud. The government refused to examine it, and by a procedural quirk, one man's "no" was enough to deny the amendment from any chance of being heard, let alone discussed.

The PC caucus offered amendments to place consumer guarantees into legislation. We offered to codify the mandatory verification call, added protection against wrongful billing, all-in pricing to ensure consumers know what they will be paying per month and clearer remedies against bad players. The government refused them.

The PC caucus offered an added solution to reduce aggressive customer retention. Under current arrangements, a new supplier will take the existing hot water tank out and substitute their own. Regardless of the tank's age, the old tank is now garbage and a significant loss to the previous supplier. Because of this risk, customer retention in the industry can be truly cutthroat. We offered to place a buyout and depreciation clause similar to the one codified in the wireless bill, Bill 60. Consumers would have been spared a lot of stress when changing suppliers, but the government dug in their heels.

In six months' time, we'll be back to square one, with the bad players pestering consumers over the phone, and

consumers will be inundated with mail, some of it misleading. Consumers who were vulnerable to high-pressure tactics will still be targeted. The government will need to take action again, earning itself some more media in the process.

Speaker, there is a better way to address these concerns, but unfortunately the government refused to entertain our amendments that would have fixed the shortcomings. All in all, schedule 2, as it is, is severely undercooked, and customers should send it back.

Schedule 3 removes a restriction for real estate brokers to charge a combination fee and commission. Ontario is the last province to have this restriction, and we're glad to see it gone.

The part of the schedule 3 dealing with phantom offers causes some concerns, and only one of them was addressed. The remaining concern centres around a consumer's ability to call a dishonest broker's bluff when the broker pressures a consumer into making a binding legal offer to buy a property by claiming there are other offers on the house. As it is written today, schedule 3 implies that you have to first buy and ask questions later. I'm convinced that this is an oversight, and in the near future, we should see it corrected.

Speaker, the government was very stubborn in committee, rejecting many offers to codify reasonable provisions to the legislation, counting on their own ability to make regulations. This is the same government that has, by regulation, destroyed merit-based hiring in schools and caused, in 2010, the largest mass arrests in modern Canadian history. Our skepticism about their regulation-making wisdom is more than justified.

To conclude, a deal is a deal, and considering that most of the provisions of this bill come in force by proclamation, we remain cautiously supportive of this bill, with the provision that many of its sections need to be corrected to avoid loopholes and unintended consequences.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: It is my pleasure to join in the debate. First and foremost, I think that while it is a small step forward, we can still agree that it is a step forward in providing some protection for consumer services. Some of my remarks will echo what the member from the Conservative Party has said. He indicated that there were areas where we could have gone further but we didn't. We in the NDP had tried, on a number of occasions, to push this bill to cover more areas, areas that would have made sense to add in, but they were not supported.

However, I do want to take the opportunity to acknowledge the great work of all the staff members who were involved in the process of this bill. There was some great work put in. There were very interesting discussions in committee hearings, and there was some great input by legislative counsel as well as ministry counsel. I enjoyed all the discourse and the discussion that occurred. I think it was, in some regards, fruitful, and it did provide a better bill.

Beginning with the debt settlement services component of this bill, I think we need to look at our priorities. The complaints that I receive in my office with respect to this issue are not so much people complaining about debt settlement services. People complain about collection agencies. That's what people are really stressed out about. That's where the consumer is receiving call after call from aggressive people on the line. The pressure that they apply, the tactics that they use, are inappropriate. It's causing a great deal of concern amongst consumers and constituents.

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The collection agents are the ones who go after the consumer to get their debt. I agree: If this government was serious about protecting the consumer, the first step would be to make sure we put in some additional limitations on the way these collection agencies conduct themselves, the way that they operate, the manner in which they communicate with people, the type of language they use, the harassing behaviour that they exhibit. Those are areas that should be limited; those are areas that should be addressed; those are areas that should have been prioritized. That being said, that was not addressed in this bill.

What was addressed is debt settlement services. By and large, the concept here is, debt settlement services are hired. They are services that a consumer hires or makes use of in order to assist them when they're in a difficult position, paying back their debts. They are vulnerable people and, understandably, they need some assistance. They should be provided some protection, but if you look at the concept here, debt settlement services are pro-consumer by their nature. By their very nature, they're a service that's intended to protect the consumer.

By and large, there are a number of good operators, good actors, in this industry, and they have provided good services. They have assisted many people in settling their debts at a far lower amount than they would have otherwise had to pay. They have assisted them by taking some of the burden off their shoulders, and they've done a good job. There are certainly some bad actors as well, and those bad actors definitely need to be addressed. Their practices, their behaviour and their business models need to be looked at and need to be regulated in such a way that we protect our consumers. That's absolutely correct.

As a starting point, we have to look at the two and acknowledge that debt settlement services, by their nature, are protecting the consumer out there, assisting the consumer to settle their debts, whereas collection agents are trying to aggressively obtain payment for debt. The priorities are a concern for me.

With respect to the payment plan, I implore the government: You have an opportunity now to look at the way debt settlement services are being paid. Because there are some good actors, and if we acknowledge that some of these—many of these debt settlement services do provide a good service that consumers need. They need to be able to exist. They need to be able to be paid

for their work, and there needs to be a payment plan in place that allows a fair and reasonable fee to be charged that does not exploit the consumer but that does give debt settlement services the ability to provide their service and assist people who are in debt.

Before proclamation, I ask the government to at least consult with the debt settlement service providers, to obtain from them some strategies in order to allow them to still exist so they can still continue to operate in a good manner and a responsible manner. Make sure that they are given an opportunity to give some input with respect to how they can still be paid and still provide a service and provide that protection to consumers.

The second issue is that there were some great deputations that we heard at committee. One of them was from some trustees in bankruptcy. They provided a plan that would assist in providing a reasonable, fair mechanism so that debt settlement services could be paid. That model that they had suggested was something that flowed from the way trustees are being paid. That's a model that could be employed, and that's an idea that you should look at.

We don't want to head down the path that we've seen other jurisdictions head down, where laws were enacted provincially that basically got rid of the entire industry; the entire debt settlement service industry was eradicated from the province. We don't want those conditions to exist, because we have to acknowledge that they do provide a good service. We just need to get rid of the bad actors and the bad business models. That's my concern with respect to that component of the bill.

The second component of the bill spoke about water heaters. This was an area where there was certainly a great deal of consumer complaint, and I was quite impressed with the fact that this was an example of government policy being directed by consumer complaints.

We talk about the fact that there is a lack of participation in our society, that people don't feel that their voice matters. They don't get involved in politics. They don't even vote. Our voter turnout is at an all-time low. We're sometimes seeing, in many communities, less than 50% of people actually vote.

At a time when there's this great political apathy, I'm encouraged by the fact that this legislation and the water heater component was largely driven by consumer complaints. It's another model, or another method, by which the public has made their concerns heard. They voiced their concerns through complaining to the ministry, and the ministry has responded.

I applaud the citizens who have taken the time to complain about this issue, to raise their concern, because your voices have been heard, and it was a positive sign for democracy. It's an alternative way of making sure that the public is participating. There are other ways to participate beyond just voting, which is one of the most important ways, but this is also a mechanism that works. So I encourage consumers to complain more about other issues as well.

In this area with water heaters, one of the big problems that we saw is that we're addressing strictly direct

sales. If someone goes door to door, if they knock on someone's door and they engage in an improper sales tactic, they're aggressive, they dupe an unsuspecting consumer, they take advantage of, perhaps, elderly consumers or people who are new Canadians who don't have the same faculties with the language and there's a language barrier—that's an important area to address, and that was the substance of many complaints: that there were aggressive tactics. They were improper. Other people would say that someone would come to the door and claim that they were working for the ministry or that they were a part of a government agency. So these are serious concerns.

But that's not the only way that people can be duped. By only addressing direct sales, there is a loophole that's left open. It's not necessarily a gaping loophole, because the way that direct sales are defined is that at any point in time, even if the sale is commenced over the phone, if you complete that sale in person, it's still considered a direct sale, so it does provide a great deal of protection; I agree. But there are still times, there are still opportunities, that people might employ a strictly telephone sale, some other form of remote agreement, or also the Internet, and those areas were not covered by this bill.

We could have easily expanded the scope of the bill to say, "Listen, the tactics that we don't think are appropriate face-to-face, door-to-door: Those same tactics aren't appropriate over the phone. Those tactics are not appropriate over the Internet," albeit there's a significant difference between the door-to-door contact, the face-to-face contact, the ability to intimidate or to dupe or to confuse, obfuscate, when you meet someone face to face. Still, this is an opportunity that we can address something that if we address it now, we don't have to do that in the future. As we've seen before, wherever there is an opportunity for the bad actors to engage in improper sales techniques or improper and aggressive sales tactics, those actors might transition into those areas. Instead of making a change and then leaving a potential opening for a future transgression or future problem, why not address it now?

The NDP offered amendments to expand the scope of this bill to say, "Listen, let's just apply this good principle of making sure the people are held up to a certain standard, that there's a certain requirement of conduct when it comes to these types of sales for water heaters—let's expand that to include other types of agreements." That was not supported by the Liberals, and I think it should have been. It would have made this bill stronger, and it would have anticipated potential problems in the future.

One of the things that we saw in general at the committee hearing stage was that good ideas that are very relevant to the issue at hand were not able to be addressed. I raise this issue because, when we're looking at a problem, if there are some good ideas that are being brought up, it only makes sense that we implement them now. If there's an acknowledgement that it's a good idea but there's not the willingness to act on it, it simply is

doing a disservice to our society; it's doing a disservice to our communities.

I noticed that time and time again: that there was an issue that was flagged that was raised by the NDP or even by the Conservatives. It was acknowledged as being a good idea, but there wasn't the action. I have to raise my concern on that: that the Liberals could have taken more initiative with good ideas that could have broadened the bill and protected consumers to a greater degree.

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In addition to the water heater component of this bill, there is a certain concern with the long-term implications of decisions we make now. On one side, we need to ensure that we protect consumers to the greatest degree that we are able to. We also have to acknowledge that a competitive environment also protects consumers. By allowing for a competitive environment to exist within a given market, we allow for the choice for a consumer to drive the market. When we don't have choice as a consumer or if there is not competition, it limits choice and, at the end, the consumer is not being afforded the best protection.

For example, there were a number of issues raised by some of the new entrants to the market. Yes, some of the practices that they engaged in were improper, but the new entrants to this water heater market also drove down some of the prices. They also offered better services in some circumstances. We need to make sure that the laws that we implement protect consumers but also protect them not only for today—to ensure that they have the proper direct sales tactics, direct sales behaviour, that there aren't these duplicitous tactics being used. We also have to make sure that in the long run the consumer is benefited by a competitive market where the prices are kept lower so that they can enjoy the savings. My concern is that some of the decisions made by this government limited the ability for some of the new entrants to compete, and I'm hoping that in some of the ministerial regulations we can address those concerns by making sure there's a balance struck in that area.

Looking at the third component of this bill—the first component that I addressed was debt settlement services, the second point being the water heater—the third component was real estate, and in that regard, I think that we were able to come up with some strong amendments that made the bill something that would certainly protect consumers but also something that recognizes the realities of the real estate industry. I think that we've come up with a solution that is effective and appropriate.

The issue has come up a number of times. It has come up not only in Toronto—it's come up across the province—but particularly in the GTA, where there was this perception for either the buyer or the seller that there were multiple offers on the table. That perception was sometimes false or sometimes misleading, and what it did was it drove up the cost. There were complaints issued, and again, this was a complaint-driven piece of legislation—I applaud the work of everyday folks coming

forward with their issues and their concerns—but the problem was that if there are these phantom offers, if there is no evidence of an offer, sometimes what happened was that the prices were raised. They were raised and inflated in an unfair way, and sometimes that would pull on the emotions of the buyer, and they would end up offering something that was perhaps outside of their budget or sometimes a price that wasn't reflective of the fair market value.

What was proposed was that there should be a tracking of the offers, and the amendment we put in place, which was the great work of the real estate association, was that in requiring real estate agents to keep offers, there is a bit of a problem when—if you're hiring your own particular broker, there is a certain fiduciary duty that exists and that protects the consumer, but if you're required to keep an offer and you are not bound by that fiduciary duty—you don't have a duty, you're not hired by that real estate agent—then they're keeping sensitive information that could be used in an inappropriate way down in the future.

The amendment we put in place, which was a strong amendment, allowed the brokerage to keep other documents, such as a list or a record of the other offers on file, and also allowing the registrar to follow up, to make sure that if I'm buying a house and I want to know if there are alternative offers on the table, I can actually contact the registrar, or you can contact the registrar as a consumer and ensure that there are indeed other confirmed offers. That was a strong amendment, and I'm happy to see that was passed through.

One of the areas of contention that came up—and there was a number of deputations to this effect—was the cooling-off period, and I want to highlight this concern because there's an opening here. There's a potential area for abuse, and so I want to make sure that the government is aware of this area and takes the steps to make sure that this potential gap is closed.

All consumer advocate groups have made it clear that a cooling-off period is important. It's something that protects the consumers, so we supported the cooling-off period. What that means is, basically, if you agree to enter into a new agreement, there should be a period of time where there is no installation; no one comes into your home and starts putting in a new water heater. You have 20 days to think it through. That's an appropriate thing because when you make a decision like this, you want to think on it. You might have felt a little bit of pressure, but this adds an extra layer of protection. You agreed to enter into the agreement, but you're given 20 days to say, "You know what? I thought it through. I looked at my bills. It actually doesn't make any sense, so I'm not going to do it."

But there's an exception in the case of an emergency. Now, while it makes sense—we don't want to have people left out literally in the cold when there is an emergency that their water heater no longer works. But the way the law is defined right now, it's not clear what it means to say there's an emergency situation.

So, what if your water heater is not functioning at its full efficiency? It's functioning at 50%. Now to some people, a 50% functioning water heater might be an emergency. It might be a big problem. You don't have the hot water you need. But without clearly defining that, we leave an opening that someone could say, "Well, it was functioning at 10% or 20% less." That's a big problem because it's going to increase the cost to the household. If you're on a fixed income, that might be a serious problem. So that leaves an opening, and we have to make sure that there's a reasonable definition applied, that it works in a way that protects the consumer and doesn't allow for any future abuse of this exemption that would, again, create a hole in the protection that we're trying to establish for consumers.

That's an area that I ask the government to be cognizant of. I know that the ministry counsel is aware of this issue, but again I ask you to make sure you look carefully, that we don't create this exemption that leaves a big hole and undoes some of the work that we are trying to establish here.

Now, with respect to some of the priorities, while I think consumer protection is absolutely important, one of the things that we've asked for a number of times on behalf of the NDP is that while consumers are complaining and they're using the ministry to voice their concerns—that's a good thing. The problem is that the next step, if you complain but you want an advocate to actually work on your behalf, if you want to take up an issue and challenge a particular supplier, a particular industry, a particular provider of a service—now as a consumer, you can complain. That's one thing. But where is the advocacy on your behalf? Where is the individual who can advocate or the association that can advocate to fight for your concern?

We've seen in this province the Ombudsman of Ontario doing wonderful work in not only receiving complaints but also advocating, also championing issues that matter. Why not, in the consumer services field, a consumer service Ombudsman, an Ombudsman dedicated to consumer services that can assist in championing or advocating for the consumer? That's something we've asked for. That's something that would be a strong step forward in providing real protection for consumers, and I ask the government to consider that again.

We're looking at a bill that's going to provide some protection; I would say incremental and minimal protection, but certainly protection. But if we had a consumer Ombudsman who would advocate and receive complaints, that would be a significant step forward. That would be a bold step forward. That would be a strong step forward in consumer protection, and it's something that I implore the government to consider now that we're looking at a piece of legislation around consumer protection.

The other issue that I'm particularly concerned about is, again, while I think these are areas of concern and people had raised these concerns—and I'm happy that we're addressing particularly the water heater issue that's

been brought up a number of times—there are other issues that are quite important, and I'm concerned about this government's lack of priorities when it comes to issues of serious concern.

One of the issues that's come up—and one of the things about this issue is that the solution is of no cost to this government. It's Bill 83, the anti-SLAPP legislation. The government has introduced this bill and has only called it forward—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Twice.

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Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I hear twice. Yes, that's right: twice. Thank you very much for the assistance, to my colleague to the right, literally to the right. The first time was June 4, 2013. The second reading was September 25, 2013.

So this bill was called forward only twice. It's a serious issue. At the foundation of our jobs here, we are supposed to be an institution of democracy. We're supposed to encourage democracy. One of the pillars of democracy is dissent, the right to get up and say, "I don't agree with what's going on. I don't agree with the government. I don't agree with the way my community is being developed." That is a fundamental hallmark of our society, and we need to protect that, cherish that, uphold that, ensure that it's given the respect it deserves, this right. The anti-SLAPP legislation was a step forward. We support this principle that if an individual in the community wanted to raise their concerns, wanted to highlight a problem, they wouldn't suffer a lawsuit that was only driven by a principle of silencing that individual; they wouldn't suffer the threat or the actual cost of a lawsuit that, at the end of the day, once it was settled in court, was shown to only have been commenced to deter an individual from participating in discourse, in democracy.

That type of legislation would not cost the government anything. There are certain areas in that legislation that we need to tighten to ensure that the language is clear and that we don't solve a problem with a sledgehammer when a scalpel would be more effective, but the principle of protecting public participation is fundamental and essential. It should be given a priority, but it hasn't been. So I question again the government's priorities when this bill has only been called twice after its first reading. I ask the government again to prioritize this bill to make sure it's given the priority it deserves. I notice that the Attorney General had an opportunity to present this bill and spoke in favour of it. Of course: It's a government bill—but not only speaking in favour; let's make sure it's a priority. Let's make sure that it's put forward in a way that it actually can be implemented into law. I'm hoping that my comments have not fallen on deaf ears.

One of the other areas that I touched on briefly was the concern with amendments being brought up, good ideas being brought forward, and then not being passed. I know that the Conservative critic also raised the issue that we put forward a number of motions, good motions that would have protected consumers and enhanced this bill, but they were all voted down.

We'll go over the three areas, starting with debt settlement services. One of the big areas that would have really protected consumers is that while we're regulating debt settlement services for the first time—they're being included in the collection services act. That's a good step. We need to regulate all industries that provide sensitive services, and the government has a responsibility to do so. But one area that came up that was quite important for the consumer is if you hire a debt settlement service and they provide a proper agreement, they have a proper payment plan in place, everything is done in a transparent and comprehensible manner and it's something that is fair to the consumer—if they do that, the debt settlement service should be able to provide at least the ability to buffer the consumer from collection agents. Many people have complained to me that they can't handle the harassing calls. They can't handle the pressure and the feeling of guilt that comes up when someone calls them on the phone and belittles them for not having paid back a debt. Obviously, people who are in these situations are facing some troubles and some struggles. The fact that we put forward an amendment that would have allowed the debt settlement service, once they were properly hired, once there was an agreement in place, to act as a barrier so the collection agent would have to go through the debt settlement service—that would have protected consumers. I know many people who have come to me, complaining about collection agencies, would have said, "That would have helped me. That would have given me that peace of mind, knowing that I wouldn't get those harassing calls." That's an area that was not accepted by the government, and I want to raise that again.

When we were looking at debt settlement services, another area that came up was the involvement of paralegals. The paralegals came forward with a deputation indicating that although they're licensees of the Law Society of Upper Canada and they've now been successfully incorporated into regulation by the law society, they are not entitled to—when it comes to collection agencies, their role and their duties are not formalized. It's a direction that the law society is headed in, but right now the legislation doesn't allow for it. We could have included it when we put forward an amendment that would have allowed for any licensee of the law society to be able to act in those circumstances, and it would have been a great step forward for allowing better access to justice, but again, this notion was voted down.

There were a number of areas that were proposed and voted down, and I just want to go through a couple of them. The biggest concern with the water heaters, the second component, was expanding its scope. We were in a good position to expand this protection; for example, the verification call. The independent verification call is a sound idea. If I'm going to buy something from a particular salesperson, to ensure that there isn't any sort of pressure tactic that makes me sign something without knowing what I'm getting into, an independent call makes sense. An independent call comes through and says, "We want to confirm the identity of the salesperson

and confirm various components to make sure that this is a fair and appropriate agreement that you're getting into." That person who is making the call is not getting a commission for how many people they can convince to enter into these agreements. They're just confirming the details. That is a good process and a good tactic for direct sales. Well, why not have an independent verification call for any sort of telephone sales? If there's an agreement that's struck over the phone and someone calls in and follows the procedure and maybe is a bit aggressive, and they make an agreement over the phone, why not have an independent phone call to verify that as well? What's the difference, really, between an agreement at the door and an agreement over the phone, when it comes to protecting the consumer? This is an area where we had put forward an amendment saying, "Let's expand this protection to apply to remote agreements as well. Telephone agreements should also have the same level of protection." Again, this amendment was voted down.

So there were a number of areas where we could have improved this bill but we didn't, and it was because the government didn't take the initiative, the opportunity to expand the protection that it could have afforded to consumers.

What we're left with now is a bill that does, in conclusion, provide an added level of protection. It does increase the protection when it comes to debt settlement services, when it comes to water heater rental agreements and when it comes to real estate transactions.

However, I want to make this point very clear. In certain areas, we're not sure about the impact or the consequences of our actions. We're not sure about what the greater implications of a piece of legislation are going to be. In those circumstances, I can see why we want to make an incremental increase, a small step forward, and then analyze the impact of that legislation and analyze the consequences that flow from that decision. But when it comes to something like consumer protection, we can take stronger steps, particularly when we know that similar steps have been taken in other areas.

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I want to draw a comparison. When we're speaking of the regulations that occurred for energy agreements, we took many steps there, but we haven't taken those steps in all the other industries that are related to energy. So while our electricity protections are guaranteed to consumers, and that area of consumer protection is strong, and we've taken a small incremental step forward for water heaters, why not expand that to other areas of gas, other areas of consumer services related to water heaters, related to hydro? We're taking small steps here when we can take stronger steps.

The overall problem that we had, as the NDP, was that there were areas where we could have expanded this bill. This bill didn't have to just deal with water heaters. It could have dealt with a broader type of consumer protection that went beyond just a narrow area that was much needed, but still too narrow. In areas where we've already taken the steps to protect consumers, we can

expand those protections broader than what we've done. I think that we're doing a disservice when we don't take strong steps in areas where there are minimal consequences, where we've seen the impact of it. We've seen the protections given in the energy file. We can implement those same policies that have worked, that have shown no negative consequences. We can implement those across the board.

So, again, I ask this government to consider the lack of seizing the moment. When we have an opportunity to make our laws stronger and better, we need to make sure that they're fulsome, that they cover all the areas where consumers need protection.

Finally, I want to just drive home this last point with the priorities of the government, that the three areas that were chosen: the water heater, the real estate and the debt settlement—again, I want to question the priority of the consumer. If the government was really serious about prioritizing the government, there were many other areas that we could have addressed, and particularly with the debt settlement services. The lack of any sort of consumer protection on the collection agent side shows a lack, I think, of prioritizing the concerns of the consumer, that if we are on one side regulating the debt settlement services, but on the other side aren't providing that same level of protection or enhanced level of protection with collection agencies, to the consumer it doesn't seem like the government's serious about protecting them, because their number one concern, when it comes to anything related to debt, is the collection agents, not the settlement services. Again, I question the government's priority when it comes to that issue, and I want the government to rethink their priorities when it comes to really protecting consumer services.

In a final plug, I want to make sure that moving forward—we'll support this bill. This bill will pass third reading; at least it will receive the support of the NDP. It's going to protect consumers, so I applaud the great work that was put into this bill. But moving forward now, we have an opportunity to introduce some other bills. We have a limited time. There is naturally going to be the winter break coming up. Again, I ask the government, let's prioritize some bills. Let's get through the anti-SLAPP legislation that will protect democracy in our communities. Let's make sure we use the time here wisely and allocate the time necessary to make sure that the bills that will protect the foundation of our society are passed through.

I question the government's real intentions regarding Bill 83. If the government wanted to pass this bill, they could have. If they wanted to bring this bill forward in an efficient manner, they could. So I implore the government to do so, because it's something important. Moving forward, I want the government to look at the priorities of this province and make sure the bills brought forward reflect those priorities, reflect the concerns of the province.

Thank you so much for the time, and I look forward to hearing more debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the opportunity to address Bill 55. We know it was introduced, actually, in the last session here at Queen's Park. It's called the Stronger Protection for Ontario Consumers Act. It's been through, oh, gosh, three or four—maybe four—days of committee hearings. Deputations were made. Amendments were banded about and voted upon, and perhaps there is room for more change down the road, through regulation.

So here we are on third reading debate now. It's a bill, as we know, that was designed to end the tactic of high-pressure sales in three areas: water heater rentals, debt consolidation and real estate.

Now, with respect to real estate and real estate sales, for the last 10 years anyway, people have been waiting for legislation, measures to better protect them from those few unscrupulous real estate agents who use the practice of phantom offers as a sales tactic. Phantom bids are jigged by a very few ethically challenged agents. There's no certainty of the nature of the offers coming in. When buying a house, ideally both the buyers and the sellers would have access to accurate information, but these kinds of pressure tactics distort the market, and the goal is to jack up the price. Inflated prices mean bigger mortgages, more household debt, higher default rates in some cases, and ultimately, it diminishes trust in our real estate industry, especially when someone has bought a house and then they find out later they've been scammed by an inflated-price phantom offer.

Buying a home is expensive enough as it is. It's stressful. It's usually the largest purchase that anyone would make. You're negotiating a mortgage. There's the fear of losing the house that you wish to purchase, concerns about what to do with the house you already own, if you do own a house, commissions—what the commissions are, and we feel there could be some more flexibility there—location. It all weighs heavily on people's minds when they've made that decision to move, and the last thing they need is an agent trying to increase their commission fraudulently by artificially upping the price, by talking about offers that don't exist or offers that are exaggerated above the actual offer or several offers that may be out there on the same house.

OREA, the Ontario Real Estate Association, suggested that Bill 55 propose amendments for REBBA, the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, to address the issue of phantom offers, phantom offers that have been fabricated by the listing sales rep to encourage potential buyers to rush their decision or increase the size of their offer. Very clearly, it's unethical, it's unprofessional, and OREA made it very clear in their presentation to committee that they strongly condemn this approach to business. I commend OREA for their strong condemnation of this phantom offer business. It's unethical; it's unprofessional.

I think of so many young people trying to buy a house, to get a mortgage, to get insurance. Often they've got to

buy new carpets, paint, water heaters—they've got to deal with a water heater rental contract—and just about everything else, and to be presented with inaccurate information—they end up buying something that turns out it wasn't worth that in the first place. So, to tackle phantom offers, it should clearly be established upfront, in an offer document. There should be a clear paper trail outlining the existence of any other offers. This would also help prevent any accusations of a consumer making false claims should there be a complaint sent in to the real estate council.

Further, Bill 55 will mandate that offers for a property be made in writing so that consumers can inquire with the real estate council as to whether other offers were made on that same property.

Mechanisms—this was discussed in committee—have to be in place to streamline this process, to simplify any additional paper burden. It could simply be a list of the offers or a cover sheet, if you will, to eliminate the unnecessary threat of red tape. Our interest is to provide real change, real protection from bogus phantom offers, not more paperwork. As the opposition, we continue to fight for an open, trustworthy consumer marketplace, a competitive marketplace. In fact, it was Tim Hudak who tabled the Consumer Protection Act back in 2002.

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The second issue covered by this legislation is water heaters. It's the number two complaint received by the ministry, and I can attest: My constituency office receives many such complaints as well. Constituents articulate their frustration at being bounced from one client service rep to another without any real resolution. I think of seniors. I think of other hard-working families trying to squeeze the budget, dealing with high electricity costs, for example. They find it upsetting when something that should be pretty straightforward is marred by questionable practices—and not only door-to-door sales, but also junk mail, telemarketing, things that oftentimes are designed to confuse the consumer.

One of my staff had an issue recently with a major player in the water heater rental industry. She discovered she was paying a lot more money than her neighbours for exactly the same water heater. We hear these complaints. How does this happen? Really, how does one know fact from fiction anymore without polling your neighbours, doing your own survey and trying to find out on your own?

There is deliberate deception. There's a hiding of costs. In some cases, there's the exploitation of customers' vulnerability, especially with the door-to-door sales.

We recognize Bill 55, if passed, would double the cooling-off period for water heater rentals. Suppliers would not be able to install new heaters for 20 days. We feel this should be extended to a number of other contracts as well, Speaker. Currently, once a new heater is installed, if there are consumer concerns with the price of the contract, cancellation charges can run up to several hundred dollars. Furthermore, suppliers can often charge for damages that may be small scratches on a 10-year-old heater.

Sadly, consumers can be taken advantage of in more ways than one. We recognize you can't legislate completely against deception or vulnerability, but you can strengthen the enforcement tools as well to ensure taxpayers have recourse beyond having to go to court.

Oftentimes, victims of these so-called scams are the people who can least afford a lawyer. When the rules are broken, recourse is often impossible. It's very slow. A claim by a consumer against a less-than-honest business can take months, even years. Again, there are the inevitable legal costs, stress, even health-related consequences.

Most importantly, this kind of business results in a decrease in consumer confidence. We're aware that there are many companies that provide superior products. They treat their customers with fairness and respect. However, times seem to change, and so do business practices. The Consumer Protection Act needs to evolve accordingly. Again, loss of confidence in business mirrors loss of confidence in the microeconomy, the general economy. We all know our economy needs all the help it can get right now.

The third leg of this three-legged legislation is problems relating to debt consolidation. To put this topic in perspective, in 2012, there were over 47,000 filings in Ontario for personal bankruptcy or consumer proposals—47,000, Speaker. Clearly there's a large number of people in this province who are facing significant financial hardship. Again, government is there for a reason: to help better protect people in some of these circumstances.

After meeting with representatives and hearing committee testimony as well from the Ontario Association of Insolvency and Restructuring Professionals, OAIRP, it was brought to my attention—they used the example of a client of theirs who obviously needed some friendlier alternatives to the more formal restructuring options that this person got involved in. He owed \$54,000. He signed company documents and didn't really understand what he was signing. He began making monthly payments of \$1,350. He was told to stop all other payments and ignore the collection calls. So he made three monthly payments—over \$4,000—then his wages got garnished. It seems the debt settlement company had not yet contacted this client's creditors. The client learned the company's policy was to not contact creditors until they collected a large sum of money. So he abandoned this plan. At that time, he was out \$4,000, and no action was taken.

The debt insolvency professionals recommended: a reasonable upfront fee, maybe \$750 or \$1,000; a similar amount payable upon approval or refunded to the debtor if the settlement is not approved; a reasonable percentage of payments distributed to creditors; and fixing initial fees—again, make everything reasonable and manageable; encourage timely contact with the creditors; and discourage the collection of payments without accountability. So some very good ideas came forward from this group. They recommend that trust accounts be maintained by the credit counselling operators, the debt collection agencies—maintained in the province of On-

tario, to deal with some of the offshore, almost, call centre approaches that existed in this business.

So three issues—three very good bits of advice on all of these issues.

Speaker, I'll wrap it up here.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Point of order: Could we get a clarification from the Clerks' table as to what length of time there has to be between you calling for further debate and when it's no longer possible to have that further debate? Is that totally within your discretion?

Interjection.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Well, good discretion then, yes.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I can help the Attorney General out, although on matters of legalities like this, he should understand that perfectly. Generally speaking, the Speaker will say, "Further debate," wait for a response—"Further debate," and a third time, "Further debate," and at that time, if no one responds, then generally speaking, the debate has ended. If that's helpful to the Attorney General, I'm glad to be of that help.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask the member to speak to the matter being debated.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm just trying to help out the Attorney General. He had a question, and I'm here to help. I'm like the government, John; I'm here to help.

Laughter.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, he does laugh, and so does everyone else.

That's pretty much what we've got here in this bill: They're the government and they're here to help, or at least they'd like to tell you that.

I can tell you that we proposed a number of amendments to this bill, and none of them were accepted. Generally speaking, we've agreed to support this bill as part of the programming motion to allow the government to clear the decks, as we said, so that they could come out with a jobs plan, but we've heard nothing about a jobs plan for the people of Ontario.

There are a couple of things in here that I personally disagree with. For example, the 20-day cooling-off period, I think, is way too long. It's actually going to be an impediment to the consumer, not a help. If you have decided you don't want to proceed with that contract, I think you can realize that in the time of 10 days. But if you have to wait 20 days for the people to go ahead and actually install that water heater, it's actually a bigger problem for the consumer than if we'd left it at 10 days. But that's what happens when we get governments and

ministers who think they're going to be too helpful. They out-think themselves, is what they do.

1720

I want to get back to the jobs plan. I want to be cognizant of the time here, too, because I know there are other speakers who want to speak as well. The jobs plan—this is part of a programming motion, so I think I can, quite frankly, speak to that without interruption. It's part of a programming motion so that we can clear the decks, because what the Premier said she wanted was to get rid of some of these less significant pieces of legislation that are, in their own eyes, important, but are not changing the face of Ontario like a jobs plan would. We want to talk about a jobs plan, but we won't—I want to talk about one job that the Premier created. He created this nice cushy job for former MPP Monique Smith down in Washington. She is probably doing a good job for Washington in the United States, because our lack of a jobs plan in Canada and Ontario is actually driving more and more people—

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Point of order.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Speaker, may I suggest, kindly, that the member speak to the bill at hand?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I would remind the member to keep his remarks related to the bill being discussed.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Quite frankly, I'm sure that the number of jobs that have gone to the United States might make her look good in Washington, but it's not looking very good here. Every day, across this province, more and more people are losing their jobs. Just last week, Heinz—

Mr. Paul Miller: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Just a moment. The member from Hamilton East.

Mr. Paul Miller: With all due respect to the member of the official opposition, I must concur with the minister. We're talking about a bill to protect consumers. We're not talking about job losses. I think he's way off the mark here on that, and I'd like him to stick to the agenda.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd remind the member to restrict his comments to the—

Mr. John Yakabuski: It must be something about my smiling face. I listened to the member from the NDP earlier go on for 40 minutes and ramble on about nothing, and no one interrupted him, but I guess they weren't paying attention. I'm actually trying to draw attention to the things that matter here in the province of Ontario and why, even though we supported this bill in a programming motion, it was partly because there was a commitment on the part of this Premier and this government to move post-haste with a jobs plan in the province of Ontario. They are failing to do so. They continue to deny that there's a problem. She talks about—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'm going to remind the member that he must keep his remarks related to the bill at hand.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm doing my very best.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): We'll have to do better.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Madam Speaker, apparently some days, good just isn't good enough. Again, I state that we're supporting the bill as part of a programming motion, and I think I'm going to leave it at that, because it doesn't appear that they want to hear the story about how they are wrecking Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? The member for Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'm actually going to speak on—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Sorry; in rotation. The member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: I would just like to address the bill.

The bill is a protection of consumers. Over the years, there have been many abuses of the consumer in fine print or advertising or marketing. A lot of different areas have been—how would I put it?—abused by whoever is selling the product or whoever is pushing the product. This bill is a start. Nothing is 100%, but this bill is certainly a start to protect consumers from people knocking on their doors with stories or fabrications about certain items that they may be dealing with.

It's easy to get off the mark when you're standing up to talk about bills and go down a path of accosting whoever the bill's presenter was, and that's easy to do. But unfortunately, you want to talk about the content. You want to talk about the weaknesses and strengths. I'll tell you, the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton, as much as it may have been boring for the official opposition, hit on many, many points that were very important about bettering the bill, certainly adding good content, good dialogue and good information. He has done his homework.

A lot of times in this House, people stand up and just don't do their homework, don't even know the content of the bill, and start talking about stuff that hasn't got anything to do with the bill. I see it from the chair you're sitting in many times, Speaker, and that's why we stand up and say, "Stick to the script."

So with all due respect, I do believe that the minister tried, with the limited input she got from other areas, to do the best she could with the people who certainly lobbied her. I think we all get lobbied, and bills are formed through input from the general public, the user groups and other elected officials. I think she really tried to listen, and that's a rare commodity around here in the last few years.

I do believe there is a sense that, in a minority government, people are starting to listen, maybe because they have to or maybe because they really want to do a good job. It's a combination of both, Speaker. I think the whole dialogue around here in the last year and a half has changed, because some people try to stall things from moving ahead; other people—for example, today someone stood up and said something about my individual involvement in something which had nothing to do with

it at all. It was fabricated totally, and it was just off the mark. It wasn't on track. It had nothing to do with what we were talking about. I was quite shocked that the member from Barrie did that, but unfortunately he decided that, for whatever reason—maybe the numbers are bad, or maybe—

Mr. Todd Smith: I don't think you're talking about the bill.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm not sure why he did that, but it all boils down to sticking to the script. A lot of people don't do that. In this particular case, I think I've stuck to the script. I tried to address the bill that was brought forward. Unfortunately, there are individuals in here who wander on a regular basis, and that's unfortunate. What I can say is—

Mr. Victor Fedeli: And when are you going to speak to the bill?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm waiting for the member from Nipissing, because he's so informative, to speak about the bill. I'm sure he's going to share his boundless wisdom with us. I can't wait.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'm here to share my boundless wit and information. I'm sorry I won't be speaking on the Fedeli Focus on Finance today. I am actually going to speak on Bill 55.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Quote page 3. It's pretty good stuff.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Oh, thank you. Yes, it actually was.

Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to speak on Bill 55, the Stronger Protection for Ontario Consumers Act. While it's my hope to support this legislation once it comes to a final vote, it's important to first understand and address the issues the bill will have an impact on. Bill 55, if passed, will affect three different pieces of legislation, and I plan to take some time—10 minutes, in fact—to address each individually.

It will impact the Consumer Protection Act with regard to the cooling-off period for consumers surrounding water heaters, the Collection Agencies Act surrounding rules for debt settlers, and the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act specifically dealing with impacts on the removal of the fee and commission restriction.

It's the government's role to ensure any consumer legislation of this kind creates a safe and trusting business environment. Sadly, with this government, many of the bills we've seen in both the past and current sessions are heavy on presentation—and actually names, good names—but light on content. Again, it's proof, Speaker, that nothing has changed under this Premier.

So what will this bill do? On rules regarding debt settlement, it will mandate that all contracts be in writing. It will set a cap on the fee that may be charged for debt settlement services. It will prohibit debt settlers from charging upfront fees, and establishes a 10-day cooling-off period for consumers. It also mandates certain disclosures and forbids certain advertising practices, while establishing penalties for contravening the act.

On the contentious issue of door-to-door sales, Bill 55 would double the cooling-off period for water heater door-to-door purchases, something we all hear a lot about, and leaves the door open for other cooling-off periods to be doubled as well. It will forbid new suppliers from installing a new water heater for 20 days and make a new supplier liable for cancellation charges if one is installed within 20 days. It also would require all sales to be in writing and recorded, with scripted follow-up sales calls to the consumer.

1730

For the real estate industry, it will remove the restriction against charging both a fee and a commission for selling or buying a house and mandate that offers for property be made in writing. It will also allow the consumer to inquire with the Real Estate Council of Ontario as to whether other offers were made on the property, in a bid for greater transparency.

So let's examine some of the reasons the government is bringing this legislation forward in the first place. The government wants to appear to be tackling certain areas of consumer services that involve high-pressure tactics and generate complaints and, thus, bad press. But although the bill does tackle certain aspects of such tactics, it in no way will improve the consumer experience.

When it comes to debt settlement, there's no doubt the government feels the heat when media stories about loan sharks and customers being taken to the cleaners are reported. No one likes hearing those stories, and, ultimately, it's this government who is held to account when innocent victims are fleeced.

One of the most common consumer complaints we get in my office, and I'm sure in other offices as well, deals with door-to-door water heater sales. Crooked water heater salespeople are likely to target vulnerable or senior Ontarians, generating more media stories and personal stress for the consumer.

It's important to note that this government has not inserted the mandatory follow-up or the mandatory cost disclosure in a door-to-door contract into the legislation but simply creates regulation-making power. Here's the catch: The power to make such a regulation exists already in the Consumer Protection Act, but it is a Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council regulation, not a ministerial one.

This bill also does not address the most frustrating part of changing water heaters, and that's the cancellations and returns. Some companies are known to frustrate consumers prior to finally giving them a tank return number, which the consumer affixes on the tank and brings to a depot. Any minor damage on a 10-year-old tank can be assessed at over \$100 without explanation. When the consumer calls to cancel, the providers are known to use tactics comparable to the high-pressure ones of the door-to-door salesperson.

Because this bill touches their competitors and leaves them more time to retain the customer, one particular company has openly stated it endorses stronger consumer

protection. However, this is coming from the company that currently is the focus of a federal Competition Bureau proceeding against it.

The real estate provision of the bill appears to be the only part of it designed to actually tackle an existing problem without much ado. Ontario is the last province in Canada to have a restriction against custom charges in real estate. Allowing a combination of fees and commissions to be charged on a real estate transaction will allow agents to compete more freely. Also, we are concerned that the requirement to keep copies of all offers will cause unnecessary hurdles linked to storing a large amount of paperwork containing sensitive banking information. If this provision is implemented, the paperwork must be reduced to a simple form.

So how do we go about improving this bill to actually ensure that consumers are adequately protected in Ontario? Let me first address the current situation surrounding debt settlement rules in this province. The framework, as it sits for debt settlement services, does not provide comprehensive enough protection for the consumers. These services are intensely advertised in many media, and Ontarians who resort to these services are usually under intense pressure. We need to ensure that any legislation aimed at protecting consumers surrounding debt settlement contracts makes the chosen settler the recipient of the collection calls. Sadly, this bill falls short on that account.

When it comes to door-to-door selling tactics, it is interesting to know that this bill, in its current form, is endorsed by at least one major player in the industry that, as I said, is under federal investigation by the Competition Bureau.

Our PC caucus disapproves of high-pressure sales tactics that exploit vulnerable people. We see no reason to delegate the implementation of mandatory follow-up calls or mandatory cost-and-service disclosures to these regulations.

Bill 55 also fails to address anti-competitive cancellation and water heater tank return practices, which, in turn, result in frustrated consumers on the phone and spurious damage charges. A vulnerable Ontarian who signs a contract at the door is unlikely to take care of all outstanding issues with their supplier, meaning that once the 20-day cool-off period has passed, the penalties become a liability on the consumer. The question has to be asked: Why is the government more willing to regulate frustrating cancellation procedures in other industries, but not water heaters?

This legislation will also impact the real estate sector. Let me say it is high time for this government to finally act upon the restrictions against custom pricing of real estate services. The bill requires brokers to store copies of all offers without considering that an average binding offer contains very sensitive private information and is several pages long. We need to reduce the potential amount of stored paperwork and private information, maybe through a simplified one-page form that can act as an official record for the Real Estate Council of Ontario.

Phantom offers are an issue that needs to be addressed as well. These high-pressure sales tactics distort the market. A consumer who inquires before making an offer is wisest. However, if he or she has already put in an offer, knowing whether or not he or she was pressured fairly becomes an afterthought.

Speaker, if we are to tackle this issue seriously, we should establish a clear paper trail and transparent disclosure on the offer document such that said offer is made in the knowledge of the existence of other offers, as I've mentioned. This way, no rotten apple can claim the consumer is making false claims when a complaint comes to the Real Estate Council.

Speaker, in closing, I'd like to reiterate that this bill is not perfect, but with the amendments my fellow colleagues in the PC caucus are proposing, it is something that could be supported. It's my hope members from all sides of the House will work to improve this legislation at committee and bring forward something that truly acts in the best interests of consumers here in Ontario.

In my closing seconds, for the member opposite, I would like to remind them that the new and fourth issue of Fedeli Focus on Finance, eagerly anticipated, will come out in another week, but you can go to www.fedeli.com to download it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Pursuant to the order of the House dated Thursday, October 3, 2013, I am now required to put the question.

Ms. MacCharles has moved third reading of Bill 55, An Act to amend the Collection Agencies Act, the Consumer Protection Act, 2002 and the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

Pursuant to standing order 28(h), a request that the vote on third reading of Bill 55 be deferred until deferred votes on Wednesday, November 27.

Third reading vote deferred.

WASTE REDUCTION ACT, 2013 LOI DE 2013 SUR LA RÉDUCTION DES DÉCHETS

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 21, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 91, An Act to establish a new regime for the reduction, reuse and recycling of waste and to repeal the Waste Diversion Act, 2002 / Projet de loi 91, Loi créant un nouveau cadre pour la réduction, la réutilisation et le recyclage des déchets et abrogeant la Loi de 2002 sur le réacheminement des déchets.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: It is my pleasure to rise to join debate around the government's Bill 91, a bill long on promise but short on follow-through. This bill would replace the existing Waste Diversion Act, and, if the minister is to be believed, crack open the recycling bottleneck and ramp up diversion rates. The minister has expressed hopes that doing so would nudge the private sector into making further investments, leading to investments in support sectors—more recycling plants, more jobs. What he doesn't mention is the other likelihood: that businesses and jobs will be put at threat when our manufacturers are saddled with half a billion dollars in new costs. We have had numerous reminders in the past month of the kind of stresses that this sector is facing. We need to listen.

1740

Ever since this province's first-ever eco taxes were introduced on Canada Day in 2008, the Ontario PC Party has been pressing this government to discard them. These levies have forced Ontario consumers to pick up the tab for recycling tires, electronics, paint cans and batteries by springing an eco premium on them at the cash register.

In November last year, our environment critic presented a bold plan to protect our environment, lower costs for businesses and treat recyclable materials not as waste but as valuable resources that we should recover and recycle into new products. Under this plan, the Ontario PC Party pledged to scrap eco taxes, get rid of Liberal recycling cartels and put the province's toothless waste diversion watchdog out of its misery.

We also said we would continue to build on the success of the blue box program created by the former PC government. This was done through consultation with municipalities, environmental groups and industry representatives, all working together, all working on developing a real solution.

The Liberals are certainly promoting recycling in a sense, lifting some of our proposals for use here. That's fine, and it's flattering, Speaker. But it's also an admission of the Liberal government's failure to create the right policies to increase Ontario's recycling rate, which has been stalled below 25% for a decade under this Liberal government. Ontario now boasts an appalling waste diversion rate of just 23%.

If that's not depressing enough, consider that in a 2004 discussion paper on its 60% diversion target, the Ministry of the Environment had projected an ambitious four-year timeline for improving on its diversion rate at the time: 28%. Five years after the 2008 deadline, we find that the ministry has managed to divert another 5% of waste—to landfill. Data from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for the year 2002 put the median waste diversion rate of Ontario's municipalities at 27%. I'm happy to report that Halton region fared much better, at 38%. But those numbers are weighed down by poor diversion rates in the industrial, commercial and institutional, or IC&I, sector.

The Auditor General's 2012 review of non-hazardous waste disposal and diversion showed the IC&I sector,

which generates approximately 60% of the province's waste, manages to divert only about 12% of its waste. This failure has been most visible in a major decline in recycling among industries, businesses and public institutions.

For the last decade, the Liberals have basically ignored this sector, which accounts for 60% of Ontario's waste. As a result, its recycling rate has slumped. Ontario's Auditor General explained that the IC&I sector has been poorly regulated because, "The ministry did not have adequate information on either the number of businesses or organizations to which the regulations applied or which segments of the IC&I sector generated the largest amounts of waste so that it might target them for inspection." That's a pretty significant oversight, Speaker.

Stewardship Ontario was set up under the Eves government to serve as a financing organization to reimburse municipalities for 50% of costs of blue box recycling. But Stewardship Ontario underwent serious mission creep after its creation, most noticeably with the creation of the so-called eco fee, introduced in 2008 on a small number of items: paint, solvents and tires. The eco fee was quietly expanded to 9,000 potentially toxic household items, such as fire extinguishers and household cleaners, on Canada Day 2010. Public outcry was fierce, and the Liberals rolled it back three months later.

Even aside from being an irritation to consumers, eco fees are not as effective as many would think. This is partly because the habit-changing incentive is less than clear. Some critics suggest that eco fees can be the equivalent of an indulgence, the historic and long-discarded practice of buying yourself clean of sin. Eco fees give consumers the impression that by paying a premium, they've done their environmental duty, so excessive and carefree consumption can actually be encouraged, not discouraged, leading to more waste.

As has been stated previously, we currently export a third of our waste to the United States every year. That's a pretty miserable definition of waste diversion.

Bill 91 has the explicit goal of revoking the Waste Diversion Act, which was passed by the former PC government as a way to extend the life of Ontario landfills, create jobs in the recycling sector and assist our municipal partners by creating a more stable Blue Box Program. But while Bill 91 would technically repeal the Waste Diversion Act, as it says at the head of the bill's explanatory note, it also allows for the continuation of this program set out under the old act.

Bill 91 continues every eco tax program brought forward by the Liberals and will lead to hundreds of millions of dollars in new costs, costs hidden from consumers.

Bill 91 not only falls short of our party's call to scrap eco taxes, it also fails to eliminate the Liberals' secretive and unaccountable oversight agency, Waste Diversion Ontario. Not only that, but the Liberals apparently plan to give Waste Diversion Ontario greater powers, both enforcement powers and the authority to set and collect

the fees from businesses. These fees would then be passed on to consumers as part of the cost displayed on a given product's price tag.

Bill 91 fails to meet the Ontario PCs' two biggest demands: scrap eco taxes and eliminate useless bureaucrats. The bill would not discard eco taxes, just move them around, displaying them on price tags rather than on receipts.

The Waste Reduction Act is essentially a shell game that moves eco taxes from consumers' receipts to price tags on store shelves. That's a dubious victory for transparency and accountability, Speaker, and it is part of why speakers in these seats say that we cannot support Bill 91.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. John Fraser: I would like to thank the member from Burlington for her remarks. I would like to remind everybody that we've had 16.5 hours of debate—more than 50 people. I respectfully submit that maybe it's time to get this to committee and get on with other business that is important to the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I've sat here for days on end, listening to see if there was any light at the end of the tunnel on this Bill 91. I'm still disappointed, and I'll tell you why.

The bill purports to do things that it actually doesn't do. If you want to look to some reference, we support the intent but not the methodology they're using here. Our critic Michael Harris and his staff—and I would have to say Shane Buckingham and Rebecca—have dissected this Bill 91 in such a way that it's made it very clear to Sony and many large companies that this simply doesn't do what it says it does. What it does is hide the eco tax. We really won't know—there's no accountability in this bill—how much they're actually collecting and, furthermore, what they're actually spending it on. We can't tolerate these kinds of inconsistencies in the goals that are laid out. If we put on the table—our critic Michael Harris, I think, to go back on this one, has put a number of recommendations on the table to make this clear.

We want to have the waste producers having a voice in this. This is an economy based on innovation and creativity, and they're telling Sony and other large companies that are moving out of the province of Ontario—job loss—that they can't do the job or can't be trusted.

What I find from this government is, they can't be trusted. That's the problem. That's what I find out now. Even when you look at the deal they made with the Ring of Fire—they've walked away. Where does it end? Where do we get Ontario back on the right footing? We have to have an economy here. We need a strategy for jobs and the economy.

1750

Yes, we need to look at dealing with waste and waste reduction, certainly recycling, but I would say that in my riding of Durham, we have an example that the ministry

has looked at, the first energy-from-waste plant in Ontario in modern times. It's the Covanta plant in my riding. That's one of the options that should be on the table. It is the future. It's being used in other jurisdictions and it's being ignored by the—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Yes.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much. I move unanimous consent that the order of the House dated November 4, 2013, referring Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act, 2013, to the Standing Committee on General—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Sorry to interrupt you, but you need to wait until the comments and questions are finished before you have a point of order.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. I'll rise on a point of order at that time.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you.

Further comments and questions?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Just to comment, again, as my colleague from Ottawa said earlier, this matter has been debated for 16 hours now in this Legislature. I think that over 50 members have spoken. I listened carefully to what the members for Durham and Burlington had to say. Frankly, for the most part, it's repeating things that have been said over and over again on that side of the House. I appreciate their willingness to continue to debate, but at the same time, I think we've heard everything we could possibly hear about this bill. In fact, most of the time, they talk about other things.

I think it's time to close off debate on this, Madam Speaker. I think this debate has run its course—16 hours, 50 MPPs who have spoken. They've all had interesting things to say, but the time has come now to get on with things.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm glad to be able to add to this debate. I know I've had a number of minutes to speak previously. I would like to just commend my colleague from Burlington, who is standing up for her constituents and the people of Ontario.

Speaker, I can tell you that Bill 91 is going to kill jobs here in the province of Ontario. We've heard sad news again today of hundreds of jobs being lost at Sears Canada. Another day, another story of job losses in the province of Ontario. Bill 91 is going to kill jobs. It's also going to make life more affordable for families in the province of Ontario—

Interjection: Unaffordable.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Sorry. It's going to make life more unaffordable for families in the province of Ontario.

I remember the eco fee debate all too well. I remember working in our family's hardware store back in the

summer of 2010. The best example I have of the Liberal government soaking and hosing the people of Ontario is over a bag of concrete mix, one of the most popular products in any hardware and building supply store in the province. A bag of concrete mix sold for \$3.99 on June 30, 2010. Because of the Liberal eco tax grab, that bag of concrete mix sold for \$7.99 on July 2, when stores reopened. I can tell you that the eco fee scam is continuing under Bill 91, except it's going to be hidden in the cost of products.

A bag of grass seed has a 50-cent eco fee. You added an eco tax to the price of cattle manure and sheep manure and all kinds of garden products. It made no sense. It was nothing but a tax grab. This Bill 91 is going to bury those fees in the price of products as well as kill thousands of jobs. In fact, electronic consumer companies are going to leave this province, move their head offices across to the States—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member has two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Thanks to the members of this House who have spoken earlier in this debate, both today and in the days before. Returning to my earlier comments, I have many concerns with Bill 91. It is unfortunate to see such vague and toothless legislation held up as a bold new approach to what is a critical concern to all the people of Ontario. There is no clear indication that enforcement standards and oversight of performance will improve on the current status quo. That is a huge missed opportunity.

It is also disappointing to see this government talk about further burdening consumers as if it was fresh thinking, Speaker. We know that Bill 91 will be bad for consumers. We will continue to pay eco taxes, and we will also be forced to pay new fees to underwrite the expansion of an ineffective recycling bureaucracy. More red tape, more bureaucracy and more taxes: Is this the best and most creative economic thinking that this government can summon up?

It is unfortunate that this government has chosen to ignore the Ontario PC plan to better protect our environment, lower costs for businesses and treat recyclable materials not as waste but as valuable resources that we should recover and recycle into new products. You're welcome to dip into our white papers at any time you're spinning your wheels. Those are still worthy ideas, and they would go a long way to improve Bill 91.

I am happy to have been part of this debate, which I believe helps expand awareness around this important area of concern. Unfortunately though, Speaker, as things stand, I cannot support Bill 91 in its present form.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Point of order, yes.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I move unanimous consent that the order of the House dated November 4, 2013, referring Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act,

to the Standing Committee on General Government be discharged and that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, and that the committee meet for one day of public hearings and one day of clause-by-clause, as scheduled by the subcommittee of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

Thank you for the opportunity to rise on a point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Is there consent? I heard a no.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

FIREFIGHTING

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question concerning the Pembroke fire base. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

Mr. John Yakubowski: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. You're correct: I was disappointed in the answer by the Minister of Natural Resources to my question, which I asked last Wednesday, November 20. I suppose maybe if there was more time, I might have gotten a little more in my answer, but I specifically asked for some information with regard to a thorough analysis of the decision to close the fire base in Pembroke.

This came down in a letter from the minister on November 7 with no notice—no notice whatsoever, no warning. That was the notice that effective December 31, end of the year 2013, the fire base in Pembroke would close. Also they were going to be closing a base in Kirkland Lake, which was ordered closed years ago, but with some pressure from the community has been kept open until this time. In fact, it was ordered closed maybe 15 years ago.

What I've asked from the minister is to justify your decision. He's gone on about, well, they're making investments in other areas. That doesn't answer the issue of closing a fire base in Pembroke.

As I've said, response times are critical when you're dealing with forest fires—absolutely critical. If you're there early, a fire that is caught in its embryonic stage, so to speak, can be dealt with quite easily. But once a fire gets a foothold or a toehold, it can be disastrous. We've seen that many, many times throughout the province of Ontario, depending upon the season, what kind of fire season it has been.

1800

So he's planning now to service Pembroke, displacing these jobs, local people, and servicing out of Haliburton.

Well, anybody who understands the geography of Ontario knows that that's not going to be simple. It's a long way; it's an hour by helicopter. So if you're going to be ferrying crews by helicopter, you can't put a big crew on a helicopter. Have you ever flown a helicopter? Our helicopters don't take a lot of payload. You can't put a whole lot of people into one of these helicopters.

Secondly, if a crew has to be dispatched from Haliburton to deal with a fire in the Pembroke district, you're going to have to deal with the accommodation costs for those people. They're not going to be living at home; they're not going to be staying at home and fighting those fires. They are actually going to be put up in motels when they are not fighting the fires.

So these are 20 positions—five fire crews of four persons each—that have been stationed there for decades. I met with a group of them, three senior firefighters, all of them with over 30 years' experience. They're not impressed with this decision whatsoever.

So I've asked the minister—and the minister didn't seem to respond to this part of it. He did call the mayor of Pembroke, Ed Jacyno, who I know very well. In fact, my condolences to Ed; I was at his mother's funeral last week. I'm not sure why the minister would be calling Ed Jacyno. He's the mayor of the city of Pembroke. The city of Pembroke has its own professional firefighting department. They are not affected by this decision, other than that some of their residents will be affected, but these people don't live necessarily in the city of Pembroke; they live in the area around Pembroke. But I guess the minister thought he was covering all his bases, no pun intended.

What he failed to do was make a call to Tammy Stewart, the reeve of Head, Clara and Maria, who has an agreement with the Ministry of Natural Resources to provide all of their fire services, because 330 people live in the townships of Head, Clara and Maria—which, incidentally, is adjacent to one of our crown jewels, Algonquin Park. So if we close that fire base, not only are we not going to have any fire services in Head, Clara and Maria, because the MNR has provided those services, but who's going to be providing the services for the northeast side of Algonquin Park, the needed quick response, in case of an emergency?

The other thing I wanted to talk about—I can't believe how fast five minutes goes—is the work that these fire crews do that has nothing to do with fighting fires: repairing docks, dealing with flooding in the spring, all kinds of different maintenance work that we'll have to hire more people to do. The savings are not there. I've asked the minister to show me where the savings are; I defy him to be able to do that. And the risk continues to grow.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The parliamentary assistant has up to five minutes to respond.

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to—

Mr. John Yakubuski: I could have used more time. At least they don't interrupt me this time.

Mr. John Fraser: I would have given you a bit of mine.

It's a pleasure to respond to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. Madam Speaker, our government's top priority is public safety, and we will continue to protect people, protect property, protect our natural resources from forest fires. Ontario is recognized around the world for its ability to respond strategically to forest fires and protect public safety.

Ontario's fire management program has evolved to deal with the challenges and opportunities of the unique forest and landscape of Ontario. The program takes advantage of the abundance of lakes and rivers across our province to fight fires with available water, whether delivered by pumps and hoses on the ground or dropped from a plane or a helicopter.

The fire management program also excels at collecting and analyzing information about weather patterns and other factors to predict where fires will occur and how they will behave. The program can then pre-position resources around the province before fires occur or spread for the most effective fire suppression.

The Ministry of Natural Resources is modernizing this program and consolidating resources at larger strategic bases. We will still be operating out of 33 fire response facilities across the province and maintaining approximately the same number of firefighting staff and support staff. These changes will not affect our ability to protect the Pembroke community.

Madam Speaker, our fire management program is flexible and mobile. The Ministry of Natural Resources routinely redeploys staff, aircraft and equipment quickly to respond to forest fires and changing hazard levels. We operate all fire facilities as a network that responds to fires wherever they occur. Every day of the fire season, we assess the need for firefighting resources and move staff and equipment to where fire hazard levels and suppression demands are the highest. Fire staff are transferred from other parts of the province as soon as they are required.

For example, a devastating forest fire occurred in Kirkland Lake in the spring of 2012. On a seasonal basis, the Kirkland Lake facility houses 20 or fewer staff. More than 140 fire program staff were quickly transferred from other parts of the province to help fight this fire.

In addition, the Ministry of Natural Resources has long-standing arrangements with municipal partners in Pembroke and CFB Petawawa to respond to local forest fires. Using these partnerships, the Ministry of Natural Resources is able to rapidly deploy staff, aircraft and equipment to deal with local fire hazards.

The fire management program anticipates offering up to 48 new seasonal positions in the northeast fire region, starting next year at bases in areas such as Cochrane, Sudbury and Timmins.

The Ministry of Natural Resources continues to invest in our fire management program, including the investment of \$8.5 million in a new flight simulator facility in Sault Ste. Marie, which will provide advanced training to fire crews. By eliminating the need to send pilots out of

the province for training, this centre will provide a long-term, cost-effective solution for managing forest fires. It will also attract pilots from other areas to train and practice, helping to support the local economy.

As well, we recently made a significant investment of \$47 million at our Haliburton, Sudbury and Armstrong facilities. This investment will provide increased safety to communities and better protect our province's forests. The current base in Armstrong is in dire need of being upgraded, as several of the existing buildings are more than 50 years old. These buildings will be demolished and new ones will be constructed.

We also invested in Sudbury, where we will be renovating the Sudbury Forest Fire Management Centre.

The existing facility is also in need of an upgrade, which will include the purchase of a nearby aviation hangar.

In Haliburton, we will be building a new fire management headquarters at the Haliburton/Stanhope Municipal Airport. The existing facility is located in downtown Haliburton, but the initial suppression attacks via helicopter are launched from the airport. Once construction of the new facility is complete, firefighters will no longer have to travel between the two locations to respond to wildfires.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): There being no further matters to debate, this House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1807.

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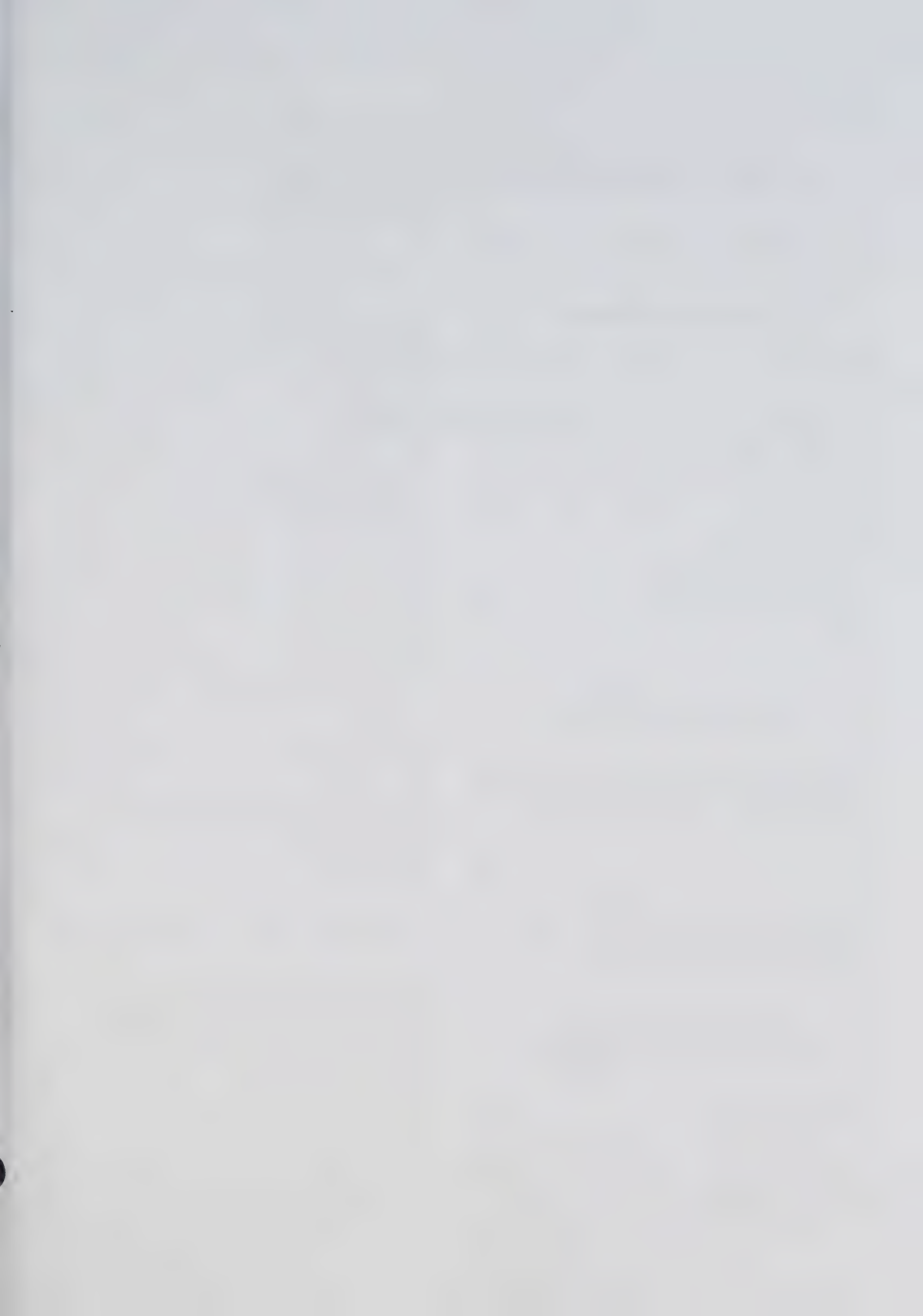
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Second Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

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Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 27 November 2013

Mercredi 27 novembre 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 27 November 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 27 novembre 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO PROVINCIAL POLICE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AMENDMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA NÉGOCIATION COLLECTIVE RELATIVE À LA POLICE PROVINCIALE DE L'ONTARIO

Mrs. Meilleur moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 133, An Act to amend the Ontario Provincial Police Collective Bargaining Act, 2006 / *Projet de loi 133, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la négociation collective relative à la Police provinciale de l'Ontario.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Madame Meilleur.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to highlight the proposed amendments to the Ontario Provincial Police Collective Bargaining Act.

I would like to start by reminding the House that these amendments were meant to be passed as part of the 2012 budget. The removal of these measures in committee was an error, and one that the other parties agree was not intentional.

We know that stand-alone legislation on this item is something that the official opposition has said they will support, and the leader of the third party has stated in writing that she also supports these measures.

If passed, the legislative amendments to the act will establish more consistency between the act and two pieces of legislation: the Police Services Act, PSA, which includes the framework under which municipal police forces negotiate; and the Crown Employees Collective Bargaining Act, which is the framework that governs other OPS bargaining agents. This would allow the party to negotiate a management rights provision clause into the collective agreement between the employer and the Ontario Provincial Police Association.

Les changements proposés vont dans le sens de l'engagement qu'a pris le gouvernement d'améliorer, de moderniser et de transformer les procédés du gouvernement en mettant en place un cadre de relations de travail

qui soit tout à la fois souple, dynamique et bénéfique pour les employés de la Police provinciale de l'Ontario.

If passed, these amendments would promote employee engagement, ensure an accountable and professional public service, and allow for management rights to be exercised in a manner that is consistent with the collective agreement policies and applicable legislation. These changes will impact approximately 9,000 OPPA members.

Comprehensive consultations were held with the OPPA in November 2009 and February 2010. Further discussions were held as part of the public sector compensation restraint consultations in August and September 2010.

The language within the OPPA collective agreements would need to change as a result of the proposed amendment. The current collective agreement with the OPPA expired on December 31, 2011. The framework agreement resolved all compensation adjustments through to December 2014, and the parties are scheduled to begin negotiations in late 2014 for a renewal of the collective agreement. It is anticipated that upon passage of the legislation, the parties will amend the collective agreements to incorporate the management rights. The employer would work with the OPPA to make changes to the collective agreements to align them with the proposed legislative amendments prior to proclamation.

Our government's commitment to ensuring that Ontario has a truly modern policing model goes well beyond labour relations issues. The Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services hosted a summit on the future of policing in 2012, at the urging of the policing community. We brought together police leaders and other partners to discuss challenges facing police services in Ontario and the sustainability of police service delivery into the future. As a result of that summit, the Future of Policing Advisory Committee was established.

The committee's role is to recommend policy changes that will make policing services in Ontario leaner and smarter. The committee has provided the government with valuable advice on a range of topics including a new community safety model that helps resolve complex social problems, strengthened local governance and oversight, a plan for the sharing of services and resources to realize economies of scale and maximize service delivery, and the identification of alternative resources for service delivery.

Cette phase du travail étant bien avancée, le ministère soumet des thèmes clés relevés par d'autres ministères et intervenants concernés afin qu'ils soient présentés pour des consultations étendues. Ces consultations suivent leur

cours et se poursuivront l'année prochaine pour nous aider à déterminer les prochaines mesures et les prochaines étapes nécessaires.

Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to say that the OPPA is a key partner in the discussion shaping the future of policing in Ontario. Collectively, we must find ways to ensure that our communities continue to enjoy policing services that are both effective and sustainable. At the same time, police services have to make decisions on how best to meet the needs and expectations of the communities they serve.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to emphasize again that the proposed Ontario Provincial Police Collective Bargaining Amendment Act would have an impact on labour relations by promoting transparency and accountability, providing consistency across the OPS bargaining units, and improving, modernizing and transforming government process by building a labour relations framework that is both flexible and dynamic and that will improve service to OPP employees.

To be clear, Mr. Speaker, the proposed changes will not impact the OPP's ability to fulfill its public safety mandate. They will, however, ensure greater consistency between the labour relations framework of the OPP and municipal police services.

La loi entrera en vigueur le jour fixé par proclamation, ce qui assurera que les droits de gestion sont intégrés à la convention collective avant d'être supprimés par la loi.

0910

Mr. Speaker, enabling stable and efficient labour relations across the Ontario public service and ensuring that a solid future for community safety in the province is part of the government's plan to work together as one Ontario to build a successful, compassionate and united province where everyone has the opportunity to connect, contribute and enjoy a high quality of life.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to join the debate, albeit a short one this morning that we were presented with by the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, on Bill 133. This is something that we've been talking about for a few years now. I want to take my hat off to Jim Christie and the members of the OPPA for continuing to raise this issue. I was the critic for community safety for a couple of years, and I must say I really enjoyed my time in that position, representing Tim Hudak and the PC caucus as our liaison with the members of the OPPA, who are the primary, I would think, movers of this piece of legislation. This is something that I know they've been looking for some time. In fact, I do believe that there was a commitment by the government that they would do this some time ago.

I want to congratulate and thank Jim and his members for the great work they do around this province. I think it's overlooked sometimes, because when you read headlines in the newspapers, the headlines are always tilted towards the negative because that's what sells newspapers or gets your spot on the 6 o'clock news. But I

want to thank them for the commitment they make in keeping our communities safe, in making our people comfortable that we live in one of the most secure and safe environments in all the world, and that when you leave your home in the province of Ontario, you know you're walking on good ground. It is our first responders and our police who make us feel that way. So I want to thank them for the great work they do and that I know they will continue to do on behalf of all of us here in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to rise as the member for London West and also as the Ontario New Democratic Party critic for correctional services and community safety. I want to thank the minister for her comments in introducing this bill and also for finally moving forward on this issue. I understand that as early as 2009 the Ontario Provincial Police Association had brought these concerns forward about the lack of consistency across the OPS in terms of the treatment of management rights in statute or in collective agreements. This has been an issue that has been flagged and highlighted as something that has to be addressed, and it's good that we're finally moving forward on this.

I also wanted to echo some of the comments that were made by the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke in terms of the important role played by the Ontario Provincial Police Association, in particular the advocacy of president Jim Christie: the negotiations and work that takes place, and the partnership that contributes to community safety in this province. We know that stable, effective and sustainable policing services will only be accomplished through solid and positive labour relations between the OPPA and the government. I'm very pleased to speak on behalf of the NDP and support this initiative coming forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments. The Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for recognizing me to speak about Bill 133. As the Minister of Labour, I wanted to state my support for this bill. I, first and foremost, want to start by thanking all our Ontario Provincial Police officers. They work extremely hard. They keep us safe. On behalf of all legislators and on behalf of our Premier, I thank them for their ongoing community service and ongoing work to keep our communities safe.

I also want to thank the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services for bringing this very important piece of legislation, something that will definitely level the playing field for our OPP officers. These measures correct an error that took place at a committee meeting some time ago, and I'm happy to note, at least as far as I know, that the official opposition and the third party support this particular bill, and I hope there will be speedy passage of this bill, given that we have the support of the Ontario Provincial Police Association.

The bill affects about 9,000 OPPA members. It really, at the end of the day, makes sure that labour rights of

OPP officers are consistent with the rights of officers working for municipal police forces. This is obviously quite crucial and essential. Again, as the Minister of Labour, I really hope that all members of the House pass this bill as soon as we can.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to add some comments to substantiate where we're going with Bill 133. But first of all, I'm glad that this bill has come forward, because when things happen too fast, mistakes happen, and that's what we've seen over and over again with this Liberal government. So it's important to be taking a look at these mistakes and figuring out how to fix them—

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: —because, guess what, Speaker? I come from a police family, and my colleague who will be speaking in a few moments also comes from a police family. We have to make sure our first responders and the folks involved in this very, very important service are respected.

I know Jim Christie, and he has a lot of respect for my brother, who is an OPP officer; my brother's son is an OPP officer; and our critic here hails from a family of OPP officers and police officers. In fact, his one son, to pursue his dream, actually had to move out of province. As per the norm over the last few years, a lot of people have trended to the western move. It's just indicative of how this government has lost sight and made mistake after mistake. We're losing our young people to good jobs in the west, even in the police services field, and it's a travesty.

Coming back to Bill 133, again it's nice to see this government taking a look at the mistakes it's made because of really quick actions and not a lot of due diligence. That's a thread that's found from ministry to ministry to ministry. Going back to the fact that Jim Christie was here last week representing the OPPA, I think we have to give due diligence to this mistake that was omitted during the 2012 budget, because we cannot take anyone for granted in this province. Our police services are very, very important.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister for Community Safety and Correctional Services has two minutes.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I want to thank the members from London West and Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, the Minister of Labour and the member from Huron-Bruce for their comments.

Mr. Speaker, the Ontario Provincial Police are responsible for policing almost one million square kilometres of land, over 100,000 square kilometres of waterways and two thirds of the municipalities in the province, which make up almost 40% of the country's population. So we have to listen to the request from the OPPA and its president, Jim Christie—I'm sure that Jim is listening today—and pass this bill that, by mistake last year, was not adopted.

We know that, day in and day out, OPP officers are patrolling our roads and highways, helping Ontarians when they are in need and providing excellent police services to keep communities safe. There's not a week that goes by without me receiving positive comments from the community.

0920

If I have my chance today, I will talk to you about this couple who were lost in Ontario a couple of weeks ago. They were deep in the forest, and because of the good service the OPP provided—you know, these police officers don't think about their own safety; they think about the safety of the citizens. So they did their utmost to help to find this couple.

Our government and the OPP are committed to ensuring the safety of all Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure for me, on behalf of the Ontario PC party and our leader, Tim Hudak, in my capacity as critic for community safety and correctional services to rise and speak about Bill 133, An Act to amend the Ontario Provincial Police Collective Bargaining Act, 2006. I'm pleased to be able to rise to speak on the bill today, to have a few comments.

It's a very important bill, and when the minister first tabled the bill, I congratulated her. I was at the Ontario Provincial Police Association's president's dinner up in Blue Mountains with the minister. I have to give her credit: She stood up at the mike that night and indicated that the government was going to be moving forward with this piece of legislation—and she did. She came forward, tabled the bill, and I appreciate some of her comments.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I offered you a ride back.

Mr. Steve Clark: She did; I want to acknowledge that, Speaker. She reminded me of something. She even offered, once she realized I was there, to give me a ride. So that's the type of co-operation that Minister Meilleur offered that evening. I know we joked about it later; after I asked her some questions about the OSPCA, I thought maybe I got that offer parked. But I have to admit that it was a great night. It gave me an opportunity to have a discussion with Jim Christie, the president of OPPA. In fact, I spoke to him this morning about the bill, had a good conversation, and I really appreciated hearing from members of the association about the importance of this bill and really what happened. In my time today, I want to acknowledge that as well.

It's a very small bill. In fact, anyone who is around this place knows that any time we debate, all of the bills that are being debated are at the table. So I walked in this morning and I grabbed a copy of the bill and I got to my desk. This is how small this bill is: I actually grabbed four copies. It's just that small that I thought I had one copy of the bill and I actually have—so maybe I'll get one of the pages to come up and take these three bills and put them back to the table so that one of the other members can have them.

Even though it's a very small bill—it's one of the only bills that I've ever seen that is printed on one page—I can't underestimate the fact of how important it is to the members of the Ontario Provincial Police Association. It's all about changing the OPP Collective Bargaining Act, which we know that the members of the association have been asking for for a long time. I'm glad that the previous critic, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, did a two-minute hit on the minister's speech. I know that both he and the previous critic, the member for Simcoe North, Mr. Dunlop, have had extensive conversations with the Ontario Provincial Police Association, have been very supportive and very understanding of how we really got here today.

I'm sure some, in debate, will call this a housekeeping measure to give the Ontario Provincial Police employees access to the same collective bargaining rights as their counterparts in municipal policing. I just want to stop there, because one of the things I realize is that not a lot of people understand policing. I had the opportunity, when I was in municipal life, to learn a little bit about what it does and what it means to be involved in the government structure. I can remember like it was yesterday. Neil Macdonald, who now is with CBC, was then with the Ottawa Citizen. When I was elected mayor, I had lots of interviews by people about different things. Well, Neil Macdonald caught me: He called me up and asked me a question. I had probably been mayor for two or three days—I hadn't even been inaugurated yet. He asked me about how I was a member of—they were called police commissions then.

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: There we go again. The Attorney General has known me for so long that he remembers me when I had hair. I appreciate that comment. Thanks for making me feel old, Minister.

Neil Macdonald asked me this question: "So, what do you think about being on the police commission?"

I, being a political neophyte, said, "What's a police commission? Let me guess."

Guess what the headline of the Ottawa Citizen was the next day: Mayor doesn't know what a police commission is. I never forgot that. I have to tell you, I was not very happy with the Ottawa Citizen for a while because he wrote that story.

But you know what? It made me sit down and understand about how policing works. And you know what? I made a decision that I would step back. Normally, the tradition back in the early 1980s was that the mayor would be the chair of the police commission. I purposely parked myself and became a member and let one of the other long-serving members become the chair. But I really learned from that experience, really took my issue of governance very seriously and spent a lot of time understanding the relationship between a police association and the administration. I found it very valuable. I think that some of that experience I had, other members of our caucus certainly haven't had before.

In terms of this bill specifically, the amendment is going to impact the 9,000 uniformed and civilian em-

ployees of the Ontario Provincial Police, and it's going to give OPP employees the same rights as their counterparts in municipal police services right across Ontario. I should add and acknowledge what the minister said in her speech today: The removal of management rights in the existing legislation is certainly not unprecedented. It really brings the OPP Collective Bargaining Act in line with the Police Services Act, and the crown employees act, for instance. And I think she acknowledged that, over time, we've been supportive of some of those changes.

I have to tell you, though, that in a minority Parliament, things are quite busy, especially these last few weeks of the session. There are lots of stakeholders who want us to get bills through the legislative process and into committee. This bill certainly was one that we didn't have a chance to caucus on, as an Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus—I know there are some questions. I'm hoping today, as part of my address, to try to address some of those questions for some of my members—maybe people in the other two parties as well. But I know that I, and certainly the previous two critics, Mr. Yakubski, from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, and Mr. Dunlop, from Simcoe North, have worked very closely with the OPPA, and I think there are a number of members who are extremely supportive.

I have to say, though, that I am disappointed to some degree that there aren't some more substantive measures we can deal with as a Legislature. I know that I called back to my constituency office yesterday to try to deal with some issues. This is the first snowfall of the year, and I can't imagine how many calls I'm going to get at my constituency office about hydro issues. I just dread leaving the Legislature this morning after question period and calling back to Brockville to find out how many people called.

People are in crisis in this province, and a day doesn't go by that I don't have a constituent come in with a hydro bill. I have people in my office crying on a weekly basis about the high hydro rates in this province. I just wanted to put that on the record, because even though this is an extremely important bill for members of the OPP—and I have said I'm understanding; I have said I'm supportive—I wanted to put that on the record, because I know that so many members have that same issue in their ridings and are basically deluged with issues.

Listen, this bill is not an issue that's going to hit question period today. I think we've seen how question period has been dominated with some of the job losses at Heinz and Sears and Imperial Oil.

Before you jump in, Speaker—I know you're giving me the look; I tell you, you're giving me that look—I'm going to jump back to Bill 133 before you stand up.

During their annual conference last week, I had a chance to speak to members of the Police Association of Ontario who aren't affected by this bill, and I know that some of the concerns I raised apply as well to the Ontario Provincial Police Association. One of the things I had been talking about there was the fact that we've got high debt in this province: about \$20,000 per person.

0930

I think there are some substantive policing issues that I want to talk about today, because there is some confusion about what this bill does compared to some of the other issues that are hitting municipal council tables. I do want to take an opportunity, Speaker, even in this fiscal crisis we have in the province, to address specifically things in this bill.

As I said, it's a very small bill. There are only a couple of sections. The explanatory note really indicates why we're here: "The bill repeals subsection 2(3) of the Ontario Provincial Police Collective Bargaining Amendment Act, 2006, which states that every collective agreement is deemed to provide that specified matters are the exclusive function of the employer and will not be the subject of collective bargaining. A consequential amendment is made to subsection 2(2) of the act."

What I want to do is try to explain to people what that section is that is being removed. I know I had questions from some of my own members about exactly what is being repealed. What's being repealed is subsection 2(3) of the previous act, so I want to take the opportunity to explain to members what exactly was in that previous section. I'm going to read it into the record, Speaker, with your indulgence. This is what's being removed from the act.

Under the heading "Exclusive functions of employer," subsection (3) states:

"Except in relation to matters governed by or under the Police Services Act, every collective agreement is deemed to provide that it is the exclusive function of the employer to manage, which function, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes the right to determine employment, appointment, complement, organization, work methods and procedures, kinds and location of equipment, discipline and termination of employment, assignment, classification, job evaluation system, merit system, training and development, appraisal and the principles and standards governing promotion, demotion, transfer, lay-off and reappointment, and that such matters will not be the subject of collective bargaining nor come within the jurisdiction of the negotiating committee or an arbitration board."

I appreciate that, to members, that's a lot to digest, a lot to accept. Not many of us are labour lawyers or human resources experts. So as part of our informed debate this morning, I'm going to give members some real-life examples of just what that means, because I've had the question come to me in my own caucus: "Give me an example of what takes place now, in the old Police Services Act, that won't be allowed under this new Bill 133." If you'll indulge me, I do have some examples. I've talked to association members. I'm not trying to say anything bad about the way the OPP is operating. I want to make sure I have the utmost respect. But I've had questions about what can happen today that can't happen once we remove that.

One example: Anyone who knows policing knows how the promotional process works. So let's say a mem-

ber of the OPPA goes through the promotional process for becoming a staff sergeant. They go through the process, they're advised that they've won the competition, that they conform to all the OPP HR standards. But then, let's say, the commander of the bureau lets them know that the member didn't meet the bureau standards. You know that in one of those types of organization there's really no autonomy the commander can have. The person's gone through the system and the system is very clear. Anybody who's ever been around the police service knows how this works in terms of promotion. They can't challenge that promotion without this legislative change. Anyone who is close to policing understands what I'm talking about and realizes that in a municipal police force, or in police forces throughout the country, in most of them, the vast majority of them, this doesn't happen.

The other example that I'm going to use for members today is, let's say a member—and it happens in every organization. Let's say there's a minor transgression. The member decides, "I realize I've done wrong. I accept my penalty from my supervisor." They take responsibility. Let's say it's within 24 hours, so it's done immediately after the offence, the transgression, occurred, and then the member goes back—let's say they're specialized personnel involved in a specialized unit. They show up for work and all of a sudden they're told that they're being transferred to uniformed duties. That's a double penalty. In other police services that just doesn't happen; you deal with the issue and you don't get doubly penalized by the administration. Without this legislative change, that challenge, that unfair treatment, is not available. So if you've ever been involved in a municipal force—and I know that there are a number of members who have been close to those forces—you'll know what I'm talking about in terms of this change.

Even though the clause is very, very large in terms of the specifics, it's a system that really works in police services right across Ontario. Again, the difference that we have, Speaker, is the fact that we're not talking about a small 10-, 15- or 25-member service; we're talking about 9,000 uniformed and civilian personnel. This is representing our province. This is our police service. I think members, when they compare those larger police services throughout our country and in other provinces, realize how this change is needed for the OPPA.

I wanted to give those changes. We're not blazing new trails in terms of Bill 133. In fact, I think it's very interesting to talk about why we're having the debate today. I know that the minister did make reference to it, and I want to make reference as well. Bill 133, or at least the contents of it, was actually contained within something called schedule 52 of the government's 2012 budget bill. Unfortunately, during the debate—I'm sure you can appreciate, Speaker—there were a number of schedules that the committee had to vote on, with a lot of different information. You've got three parties, you've got a minority Parliament and, you know what? Things happen. It's regrettable. In this particular schedule 52, in addition

to this OPP management rights clause, there were also some arbitration changes. From our perspective they didn't go far enough, based on the input that we received from some of our municipal partners. I believe New Democrats—I'm not going to talk for them; they can put their comments on the record. I think they thought they went too far. As a result, the way that the situation happened, they weren't moved forward. I appreciate the minister's characterization of what happened at committee regarding schedule 52. It was defeated that day as—I think her quote was, "in error, and one that other parties agree was not intentional."

I do want to point out two things, though, about this. First, if the changes put forward in Bill 133 were included alone in schedule 52, I suggest that we wouldn't be having this debate today and there wouldn't be any Bill 133. Secondly, I think the government did have the votes—and I'm not going to go into that whole situation that happened with the recess and how the votes ended up; it's ancient history. I'm not going to revisit that whole thing. I think we just need to move on. So it's a regret. I think the minister has heard from me, as the present critic, and from the previous two critics. I'm hoping that the bill will be able to be moved forward. I still, though, do regret that we're not having a more substantive debate on some other issues today, but I appreciate the fact that we're having the debate and having the discussion.

I would like to take an opportunity, Speaker, if you'll indulge me. The member for Huron-Bruce talked about members of the police service who are associated with my family. When the minister spoke about the bill earlier—I'd better get some water before I start talking about my family—I did mention my son Mitch, who has since moved to Edmonton to become an Edmonton city police officer.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: He'll be a Calgary Flames fan—

Mr. Steve Clark: No. I'm a Sens fan, but Mitch is clearly a Toronto Maple Leafs fan. He's clearly a Toronto Maple Leafs fan. There's no question that he's a Toronto Maple Leafs fan.

Interjections.

0940

Mr. Steve Clark: Okay, okay. Speaker, call my caucus members out of order so I can get on with my speech.

I do want to take the opportunity, because I did mention him when I responded to the minister's introduction to the bill. I mentioned his mom, Cindy Bisson, who is an Ontario Provincial Police officer with Grenville county. Her husband, Paul Bisson, is a retired member. My caucus colleagues know that sometimes I refer to Sergeant Bisson as my husband-in-law, because anybody who understands when I talk about my son and his mother and his stepfather—I think people know the drill. So I do have OPP officers on that side of the family.

I also have another officer I want to talk about today, and that's my late father-in-law, David Roberts. I appreciate my wife Deanna being the daughter of an Ontario Provincial Police officer. My late father-in-law passed

away on Christmas Eve 2007. He was a great person. He had a tremendous interest in politics. He was actually one of the few people I've met who regularly watch question period and the debates. He was a real political junkie. He loved debates in this place. He had a vision for me that I didn't have at the time. I was more interested in the kids because they were younger. But he felt that if someday I would be in this Legislative Assembly, somehow I would follow my predecessor, Bob Runciman, now Senator Runciman. He kept saying that he hoped one day to see me as a member of provincial Parliament. He never got to see that, because he passed away in 2007, but I've been waiting to try to talk about his career in the OPP. So I hope you'll indulge me, because I want to talk about some of the places he served in his career. He was a great guy.

I'm glad the member for Oxford is in front of me, because he was actually born and raised in Woodstock, Ontario. My late father-in-law, David Roberts, joined the OPP in September of 1961 at the age of 23, and he was posted to the St. Thomas detachment. He worked there from September 1961 to the spring of 1968. It was interesting. I received some information from my mother-in-law, Freda Hilderley, who lives up in Newmarket, that he also did some summer duty in Port Stanley. That was quite common, that they would also do some summer duty in a different community.

As with most OPP officers, he moved around a bit. From the spring of 1968 to the spring of 1975, he was in Parkhill, and at one point he was detachment commander of a two-man detachment which came under the jurisdiction of the Strathroy department. He also did some summer duty in Grand Bend. During his time in Parkhill, he was promoted to corporal and then he was transferred to Brockville, and that's when he moved the family to Brockville. He was stationed in Brockville from 1975 to 1984, and during his time there, he again was promoted, from corporal to sergeant. In 1984 there were again a number of changes. As I said, anybody who knows OPP officers knows they do move around a little bit. He was then transferred to Oak Ridges and served in the Oak Ridges detachment from 1984 until his retirement in 1992-93. In Oak Ridges, I think there was a new Aurora detachment that was created.

I have to tell you a story, Speaker. He told me a story about Frank Klees, the member for Newmarket-Aurora.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Can you tell us the story?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm going to tell you the story. When he was looking after Oak Ridges-Markham, my late father-in-law told me he drove him in a Santa Claus parade one time in a convertible. As you know, the member from Newmarket-Aurora has a wonderful head of hair. If Christina Blizzard ever had a vote on the best hair in the Legislature, I think Garfield Dunlop, the member for Simcoe North, and the member for Newmarket-Aurora would sort of be neck and neck.

So my father-in-law is driving the convertible in the parade. MPP Klees is in the back. He took off his OPP hat and put it on the seat. As he was driving through the

Santa Claus parade, he noticed that, way down in the distance, there were a number of kids, and there had been some fresh snow. He noticed the kids were getting some snowballs ready, and they were coming up closer and closer to these three kids with snowballs. So just at the last moment, my father-in-law took his OPP hat and put it on his head, and they scattered.

I remember telling that story to MPP Klees and having him laugh, saying, "I love those OPP officers. They go above and beyond the call of duty to protect members of provincial Parliament." My father-in-law helped Frank Klees look his best that day in that Santa Claus parade. All he had to do—he didn't have to exert any force; he just had to put his hat on. It was great. Again, I wanted to tell that because the member for Newmarket–Aurora represented different ridings, but he had always represented that area since my father was in Newmarket–Aurora—

Mr. John Yakabuski: It would've been devastating.

Mr. Steve Clark: Pardon me, sir?

Mr. John Yakabuski: If Frank had got a hair knocked out of place, that would have been devastating.

Mr. Steve Clark: No, that wouldn't have been good. It would have been tragic.

I know that Mr. Klees will get me back at some point for telling this story.

I also want to talk about how, after his retirement, my father-in-law also did some photo radar when photo radar was in the province. It was fascinating talking to him about the creation of the photo radar unit and the dismantling of it as well. It was interesting how, even though the photo radar system had stopped, he was still appearing and going to court to deal with some of the charges. The Attorney General is here; I was amazed at the time at how long it took from those original charges to be levied and sent out to members for being caught by photo radar to the time that he actually went to court and gave his testimony. I couldn't believe how long he had been retired from the photo radar unit, and he was still going to court.

Just in closing, he was a member of the OPP vets, Toronto chapter number 5. My father-in-law, David Roberts, was very loyal to the OPPA. He was a proud OPPA vet. He wore his OPPA pin often, on a number of his jackets. He was one of those people who was really proud of serving the province of Ontario as a member of the Ontario Provincial Police.

He felt that the system where he got to see some different areas of a province—it was a bit hard on the family. They had three kids. I know when he left St. Thomas, he had three young children and moved around from Parkhill to Brockville, and then back to Oak Ridges.

But I never had the chance to talk about him as a great father and a great mentor to me in terms of politics. Again, he never got to see me sit in the Legislature, which I think is regrettable. But I know that he was always very supportive of me in my political endeavours, so thank you for giving me that opportunity to talk about my late father-in-law.

Applause.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you very much.

I want to go back to Bill 133. I've had a lot of people in the community confused about an OPP bill before us. I spoke to Jim Christie about this morning. A weekend almost doesn't go by that I don't have some discussion about the OPP—mostly confusion about this bill, because it's a very narrow bill. As I said, it's a very small bill, dealing only with the OPPA, the contract negotiations and taking that exclusion out, but I've had a lot of discussion in communities about the OPP billing process.

I just had my briefing last week. I want to thank Minister Meilleur for having her staff assemble to give me the briefing on the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Her staff were very accommodating to me, to give me the overview of what's happening in the ministry.

A lot of people, when they heard or read—because what happens is, AMO sends out a legislative briefing to all the municipalities, and when people saw that there was an OPP bill on the docket, they came to me and said, "Is this the OPP costing bill?"

0950

I think what I've seen is that there are three things happening right now that are confusing people. There's this bill, which deals with the very narrow OPP negotiations and removing that management clause from the act; there's the OPP billing reform that's taking place; and there's also the future-of-policing discussion that's taking place in the province. I have to admit that after that AMO notice went out, I had mayors coming to me saying, "Is this the OPP costing reform that's coming to the Legislature?" I had my own members, before they read the bill, before the bill was printed, asking me what this piece of legislation was about: Was it about the formula? All you have to do, Speaker, is go into the clips this morning and you'll see story after story about these issues.

Policing is in the media a lot lately. I'm looking at a story from the Orillia Packet and Times that was published on Tuesday, November 26, at 6:24, by Sara Ross: "City Could Save \$1M with New OPP Cost Formula." It's referring to the city of Orillia's policing budget. Again, it was something that has come out of some of the initiatives of the ministry.

There's a story here in Meaford from the Sun Times in Owen Sound, from Rob Gowan. It was published yesterday at 3:40: "Meaford Makes Policing Decision," is the headline, going through a discussion about moving to a pay-as-you-go model over the next year while they explore all the options.

There's another Owen Sound Sun Times story from Rob Gowan called "Policing Cost Concerns Remain." It's yesterday afternoon's story, talking about a local information session on the OPP's billing review process.

So there are stories going all over the province on this, and I have to admit that when I was home on the weekend, I did have a couple of mayors question me about this, about whether this bill was dealing with the costing. It was good that I had the briefing with the minister's

staff to go through it, because it is three separate initiatives and people shouldn't confuse them. This is very narrow in scope, only dealing with the OPPA. The other two are wide-ranging discussions. I do believe—and I said this at my briefing; I know that there are some ministry staff in the back behind you—I was pretty clear that I really think the ministry needs to communicate exactly what's happening in policing—not just this bill; not just Bill 133 and how it affects the management rights, but also the other two systems of what's going on right now.

I've had mayors come up to me, and they know right now based on their discussion that there are going to be winners and there are going to be some losers. I think all members know that these discussions are going on. Some communities may not know the impact, but I do believe that the ministry has a responsibility to come and talk about some of these issues.

In my own community where I live—Brockville—their OPP costing was put in limbo. It was a very divisive discussion in the community. That city is the first incorporated municipality in the province, so obviously it has the first police force in the province. It's over 181 years old. There's a big discussion going on that's now parked because of this costing.

I do want to just quickly talk about the OPP: the fact that there are 324 municipalities that are serviced by the OPP and members of the OPPA. According to AMO, the costs of policing are all over the map. I have to put on the record that some costs per household are as low as \$100. In fact, I think some are even lower than that; there may be one or two. Others pay more than \$600. In fact, in my riding, the town of Prescott would love to pay \$600 per household, compared to what they pay. Right now, they have one of the highest per capita household costs in Ontario, at \$900. I know that there are a number of mayors who have spoken to me about this process, and they were asking, "Does this bill provide clarity for those OPP costings?" I tell them, "No, it's a very narrow bill."

I challenge the staff within the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services to have a more substantive debate. We are in the last couple of weeks of the session. I'm not sure what the government's intention is—whether we're having night sittings, whether they're going to put this bill on a legislative programming motion. I can't read John Milloy's mind, as the government House leader, but there are a number of bills like this one where the stakeholders are asking when these bills are coming forward. I know even you, Speaker, have a bill that you're quite anxious to have go through the legislative process. This is what happens. There are lots of things that want to get passed, that want to have that due diligence in the Legislature, and I think that policing is an issue that every community has been talking about right now, no matter whether you have a municipal force or whether you're dealt with by the Ontario Provincial Police.

I also want to try to clarify the confusion between the OPP costing and the Future of Policing Advisory Com-

mittee. I know that the minister struck a committee more than a year and a half ago—another one of the government's many panels and committees that are studying the issue. I just want to quickly—very quickly—try again to provide that clarity on what's not in the bill but is still out there and of concern to police officers and communities, the fact that they are looking at a number of options regarding the future of policing. I just want to quote from a communiqué, if you'll allow me, Speaker, and then I'll move back to the bill. This is a communiqué that the government put out in June:

"Following the establishment of the Future of Policing Advisory Committee (FPAC) last year, the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services (MCSCS) has worked with our policing partners to plan for effective, efficient and sustainable police service delivery in Ontario in the future.

"Through FPAC and its four working groups, MCSCS has sought the experience and expertise of senior policing and municipal leaders in reviewing the issues and helping develop a clear plan forward.

"FPAC and the working groups have provided thoughtful and valuable advice to address several emerging themes. Those themes include:

"—Forward-thinking policy direction provided by the province that includes clear goals, objectives and priorities for policing, inclusive of performance measures;

"—A new community safety model that provides for multidisciplinary approaches and partnerships to resolve complex social problems;

"—Strengthened local governance and oversight;

"—Sharing of services, infrastructure and resources to realize economies of scale and maximizes service delivery; and

"—Identifying alternative resources for service delivery while ensuring proper training and oversight."

There is a bunch of other information. I think I'm going to stop there. But the time frame—it says, "expected completion time frame of spring 2015." So when you look at it—if you were a municipal politician, Speaker—you know that's 18 months and then it's another 15 months. I just question whether municipalities can wait that long, given the fact that there's another initiative on the cost of policing that's going out. There are public meetings like the ones that I quoted in these stories today, in the media. There's that lack of understanding on what the process is. I think that communities and local mayors and councillors should be briefed on that. I think members of the Legislative Assembly should have a far more detailed briefing on what those initiatives are doing, because when we look at what this bill covers, it's only dealing with that small, narrow section for collective bargaining.

I do want to take an opportunity to give a couple of tributes to the government. I want to talk about the fallen officer memorials, because I think that that's an initiative that we need to give the government credit for, just like I gave them credit for bringing this bill forward. The minister certainly delivered on her word at that OPPA

conference. I know that in my riding of late, we've talked a lot about the service and the tremendous job that our men and women of the Ontario Provincial Police do to serve Ontarians. When I first became the critic, I had two services that I attended—one for fallen firefighters. I came down, and the minister was there. We had the tribute to the fallen, and it was a very moving experience. I saw General Rohmer last night at the Churchill Society Dinner at the Royal York. General Rohmer and Premier Wynne and the minister officiated over the tribute to the fallen, which honours our fallen police, firefighters, paramedics and Canadian military personnel who lost their lives. It was the first time I'd ever attended that service, Speaker. It was tremendously moving, one that I will not soon forget.

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Over the years, we also pay tribute to the sacrifice of officers by honouring them through the Highway Memorials for Fallen Police Officers Act. I want to just talk about that, because there's some special significance in my riding. Since 2002, 52 highway structures have been named in honour of fallen officers, and over the past couple of months, I've been honoured to support two initiatives to rename bridges in Leeds–Grenville after Ontario Provincial Police officers killed in the service of people in my riding, and in this opportunity of talking about the important service that OPP officers do, the fact that there's a bill that brings them, in terms of the bargaining chip, consistent with other officers, I wanted to pay tribute to those two officers that I recently wrote a supportive letter to.

I also want to recognize Jerry Carmichael from the town of Gananoque, a long-time friend of mine, who was driving one of them. I sent him an email the other day, inviting him to my MPP public reception on December 8, and he told me it was almost impossible for him to tear himself away from the 80-degree heat that he was in to come back to Ontario to deal with the party. But I do want to recognize his hard work on trying to rename the County Road 33 overpass on Highway 401 to honour Constable Henry J. Harper.

Constable Harper died on September 11, 1957, from injuries he suffered while on duty a month earlier, on August 5, 1957. The officer had been investigating a traffic collision on the 1000 Islands Parkway just east of Gananoque when he was struck by a vehicle. It was a terrible tragedy, as the 28-year-old left behind his wife and three daughters, and I should add that his wife, Ellen, was expecting the couple's fourth child at the time. I was interested to learn that, prior to becoming a police officer to serve our community—he served the area where he was born and raised—I found out that Constable Harper was an incredibly talented kayaker; in fact, he represented Canada in the 1948 Olympics in London.

Earlier this month, I wrote a letter to support renaming the CN overpass on Highway 416, in another area of my riding, in North Grenville, in honour of another provincial constable, Constable Alan G. Thompson. The memorial recognition effort was led by Sergeant Craig

McCormick, who is in the Kemptville OPP detachment in Grenville county. I'm glad that I was able to support the nomination of Constable Thompson.

On the night of March 31, 1975, Constable Thompson was killed on duty while in pursuit of a speeding vehicle. The officer's cruiser was struck by a train at an uncontrolled level crossing on Beach Road. A nine-year veteran of the provincial police, Constable Thompson left behind his wife, Janet, and their two children, Michael and Pamela. As I wrote in my letter supporting this fitting honour for Constable Thompson, "His death is a tragic reminder of the risks police officers and all first responders take every day in the service of their community."

I look forward to the government organizing dedication ceremonies next year, because I think it's very important in our ridings to honour the service of people like Constable Alan Thompson and Constable Henry Harper, who paid the ultimate price in defending our communities and making our communities safe. I also want to take the opportunity, again, to thank Jerry Carmichael and Sergeant Craig McCormick for their very hard work in getting this together.

Speaker, I could actually go on and on. I'm very passionate about policing in the province. I appreciate the work that Jim Christie and the members of the OPPA do. I appreciate the openness of the government to table this bill for debate. I look forward to speaking to my caucus about it in the next week, and I look forward to working with my colleagues on recognizing the very important contributions that members of the Ontario Provincial Police make every day in this province.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on Bill 133.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to rise, as the member for London West, to make some comments in relation to the remarks from the member for Leeds–Grenville. I wanted to thank him for his eloquence and his gift for storytelling. I learned a lot from his speech and really appreciated his family experiences. The story of his late father-in-law brought to mind for me some places that I'm very familiar with: Port Stanley, Parkhill, Strathroy and Elgin. As a former trustee with the Thames Valley District School Board, I had the pleasure of travelling around to many of these communities in southwestern Ontario that were within the district.

I also wanted to comment about his disappointment about the other issues that the Legislature could be dealing with, should be dealing with. He mentioned high hydro rates, which certainly is an issue as well for me in my riding. We are constantly getting calls from constituents who are dealing with the cost pressures of high hydro rates and having their hydro turned off, and having to work with the city to implement some emergency assistance so that constituents can have their heat on.

I wanted to echo the member for Leeds–Grenville in his congratulations to the ministry for bringing forward this legislation. It is small, as the member said, but it is

important, and it's something that we, as a Legislature, definitely should be moving forward on as expeditiously as possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I appreciate the comments from the member from Leeds–Grenville. I'm pleased that he acknowledged the work that is being done on the OPP cost, and I'll say to him that, yes, it's long overdue. No party before did anything about it, so at least we did the review. We put a committee together. It's important, because then we get the input from—they may believe that when you're the minister and when you're in power, you know it all and then you don't need to consult. On this side of the House, we believe that we need to consult, and so that's what we have done. There is a good report that was presented to me. But as he said, there are winners and losers, so we have to make sure, before we make the final decision, that everybody knows what's going on.

We are here to talk about Bill 133. I would like to see this bill pass, because if this bill passes, the proposed changes will move the management rights clause out of the legislation and into the collective agreements for uniformed and civilian staff.

The member from London West may think it's a small move, but for the OPP, for Jim Christie and his team, it is very, very important.

We have been listening. That's why we put this bill—not this bill, but this change into the budget bill last year. It was not approved, so we're trying a second time for the OPP.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to commend my colleague from Leeds–Grenville for his wonderful presentation this morning, and his remembrances as well as his own thoughts on policing in general.

As I said earlier in the hit, I was the critic prior to my friend Mr. Clark, and I, too, had the opportunity to attend the police memorial for the fallen, as critic. The minister was there as well as Premier Wynne.

I'll tell you, that is some special ceremony. With the names of each one of those officers who has lost their lives in the line of duty from as far back as the records have been kept, it is very special. Then the march past and the parade that follows is something that literally blows you away. It's something that's very, very special.

He talked about the naming of bridges and overpasses after fallen officers. I take some pride in the fact that Phil Shrive, who was an officer with the Renfrew detachment of the OPP, who lost his life in the line of duty in 2003, prior to me becoming a member of this Legislature—I presented a motion to the Legislature. The member for Sudbury, Rick Bartolucci, had actually put a private member's bill in years ago allowing bridges to be named after fallen officers. When I got elected here, I put forth a motion to name the bridge over the Bonnechere River at Renfrew after Phil Shrive. I'm proud to say that it was

the first structure in the province of Ontario ever to be named after a fallen officer. Since that time, you'll see that, all across the province, there have been structures named. I'm glad that it started, and I'm proud that Phil Shrive was the first one to be recognized.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? Seeing none, the member for Leeds–Grenville has two minutes.

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to thank the member for London West, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and, of course, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services for their comments regarding my address on Bill 133.

I also want to take an opportunity—I was remiss in acknowledging the two existing bridges in my riding that have officers' names. I want to acknowledge that the motorist crossing Highway 416 bridge over the Rideau river, just north of Kemptville, is now the O'Callaghan bridge. Traffic Officer Hiram O'Callaghan of the Ontario Department of Highways was on his motorcycle patrol on the afternoon of January 12, 1928, on the former Highway 16 near Kemptville when he was killed. It was a head-on collision with a delivery truck, and Traffic Officer O'Callaghan was killed instantly. He was 43 at the time of his death and was survived by his wife, Mary, and their six children: Charles, Fred, Gerald, Claude, Marjorie and Dorothy.

I also want to acknowledge the bridge sign posted at the Blue Church Road overpass on Highway 401. It's in honour of Constable Tyler Boutilier of the OPP. He died on May 23, 2004, while responding to a call on Highway 15, north of Seeleys Bay, when his cruiser was struck by an oncoming motorist.

These tragedies were now acknowledged by this program. It was unfortunate that I sat down without acknowledging those two existing bridges in my riding.

Again, I just want to wrap up my comments by acknowledging that I look forward to the debate, and I look forward to discussing this bill with the minister and how it can be moved forward.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being close to 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'm very pleased this morning to introduce three constituents of mine from Windsor–Tecumseh. They're in the west gallery this morning. We have Jim Wood, the president of CUPE local 82 with the city of Windsor; his wife, Judy; and Chad Goebel, the vice-president of CUPE local 82. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Rick Bartolucci: Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce four firefighters who do a great job within the province of Ontario: Kris Volpel and Rob Hyndman from

Sudbury, Ontario, so from the Sudbury fire department; Warren Scott from St. Thomas; and Mike Pauze from Cambridge. Welcome to you and to all the firefighters.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to introduce to you this morning two firefighters from Simcoe North: Rene Oldfield from the Orillia fire service and Michael Gagnon from the Midland fire service.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'd like to welcome the Giesen family to the Legislature today. I have Jennifer Giesen; Theodore Giesen, who was a page here last session; and Emily Giesen. They are here to support page Sarah Giesen today. She's page captain. I want to say thank you to them for coming to the Legislature, and congratulations to Sarah on being the captain today.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, would you please help me welcome two great firefighters from Kingston: President Ann Bryan of the Kingston Professional Firefighters Association and Jeff Olejnik. They're great firefighters in Kingston.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased and delighted to welcome the parents of page Jeffrey Howson, Andrea and Mark Howson, who are here with us in the visitors' gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I welcome and I ask members to welcome to the Ontario Legislature firefighters from the Niagara region: Ryan Madill, Dean Stoltz, Chris Wheeler, Mike Fowler and others who are here from the Niagara region.

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to welcome Tim Fulford and Dana Yonemitsu from the Bancroft and district real estate association, and also Elaine O'Hara and Sharon Shortt from the Quinte district real estate board. They're in town for the Ontario Real Estate Association political action conference. Welcome to question period.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Speaker, I'd like to welcome Peter Osterberg, who's here all the way from Timmins with the firefighters. I know that Randy Richards from Sault Ste. Marie is around here somewhere, and I see Mark McKinnon back there. I suggest we welcome all firefighters who are here today. We look forward to seeing them tonight.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Speaker, it is a real privilege for me to have the chance to recognize and welcome two very special guests to me who are here in the east members' gallery. My mother, Margaret Del Duca, and my uncle, Henry Leonard, have joined us here today.

Mr. Rob Leone: I'd like to introduce John Jetter and Ken Talbot, members of the Cambridge Fire Department, who are here at Queen's Park.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd also like to welcome two firefighters from the city of Windsor: Brian Bobbie and Andre Gingras. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I want to welcome all the firefighters who are here today in Queen's Park, but Ontario's finest come from Ottawa, so I want to welcome John Sobey, Erik Leicht and Craig Morrison. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Speaker, I'd like to welcome two firefighters from the Whitby fire department, the best

in Ontario: Mr. Bob Brandon and Mr. Dirk Franke as well.

Mr. Bill Mauro: We have at least two members here today from the Thunder Bay Professional Firefighters' Association. I'd like to welcome both Eric Norlund and Dennis Brescacin here in the Legislature today.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I'd like to welcome Dan VanderLelie. He is the president of Burlington Professional Firefighters, Local 1553.

Miss Monique Taylor: I would like to welcome some wonderful firefighters from Hamilton. We have Ron Summers, Dan Santoli and Colin Grieve. Welcome to the Legislature.

Ms. Soo Wong: I would like all of us to welcome three classes of grade 10 students from Dr. Norman Bethune Collegiate Institute in my riding of Scarborough-Agincourt. They are coming in. Their teachers are Alison Rimell and Bibi Stojanovski. Welcome to the Legislature.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to welcome Gwen Kirkpatrick and Ron Garland of the Huron-Bruce chapter of the Ontario realty association.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to welcome two exceptionally fine firefighters from Guelph, Colin Hunter and Jason Smith, representing the Guelph Professional Firefighters Association.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: It gives me great pleasure to welcome the president of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, Mark McKinnon, and the vice-president, Jim Holmes, and all the firefighters. I invite all of you to come to the dining room tonight at 5:30.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm not sure if there are members of the professional firefighters from my riding of Durham here, but I'd like to welcome them to Queen's Park. Members of the firefighters' association: Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to welcome my good friends Marta and Aubrey Dan, who are here in the Legislature this morning. Aubrey is a dear friend who has contributed a great deal to Ontario's arts and culture community. So welcome to them.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I too want to welcome the professional firefighters to Queen's Park today. A representative from the Woodstock Professional Firefighters Association, Trevor Ford, will be here. But I want to thank them particularly for their support for my private member's bill that will be debated this afternoon.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to welcome Dawn Lee McKenzie, president of the Realtors' Association of Grey Bruce Owen Sound, who will be visiting Queen's Park today.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I wish to introduce Steve Barkwell and the firefighters from Oshawa and welcome them to Queen's Park, as annually we do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let me offer my own introduction, in the Speaker's gallery, to the best fire department in Ontario. I guess I get to say that.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I've been asked if I was partisan. I'm just being factual.

Mr. Tom Smith and Mr. Gavin Jacklyn are here with us with the firefighters. I welcome all of our firefighters and our schools and all of our guests. Thank you for being here today.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Does the Speaker get the opportunity to correct his record?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It doesn't happen.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier about the ongoing job losses in the province of Ontario. I think, Premier, you'd agree with me that Ontario is at a crucial inflection point. We can continue down the same path we're on of job losses, high youth unemployment—a province where one million men and women woke up this morning who want to work who have no job to go to—or we can choose a new path for a better Ontario. We've laid out our plan to do exactly that.

We woke up this morning to another series of job losses. Sears Canada—almost 800 jobs, the large majority here in the province of Ontario—will be closing down their parts processing plant in Belleville, by way of example.

You know, Premier, I agreed to clear the deck to see your jobs plan. It seems like every day, every week, there are more and more job losses, particularly in manufacturing. Will we actually see a plan before Christmas, or is this the best you can do?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Leader of the Opposition will want to hear some more names of companies that are coming to Ontario who are creating jobs and expanding, and I will speak to those in the supplementary.

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But, Mr. Speaker, we actually have a plan, and I have spoken about this plan many times, as has my team. We believe that investments in people, making sure that people have the right skills, making sure that they have the right training opportunities; investments in infrastructure that will allow communities to draw business to their communities and make sure that goods can move around the GTHA region and beyond; and investments in a business climate that is competitive, innovative and dynamic and allows businesses to thrive—those are the investments and that's the framework within which our plan is functioning. Businesses are coming to Ontario.

I understand that the manufacturing sector is going through a transition, Mr. Speaker, and we are very aware of that. It's all the more important that we create that environment for business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Hold on a sec here. The Premier calls 300,000 manufacturing jobs lost a transition? She

calls the loss of almost 40,000 manufacturing jobs under her leadership alone a transition? I call it a hollowing-out. I call it a decline in the province of Ontario. I call it an economic disaster. And for you to stand here and say, "Oh, it's just a transition. Oh, it's just the forces of globalization"—the problem is, Premier, these plants are leaving your province of Ontario and setting up shop in the States and in Quebec. John Deere, which had built farm equipment in the Niagara Peninsula for decades, picked up stock. That is still being built, but it's in the state of Wisconsin. Heinz had made ketchup for 100 years in Leamington, in the province of Ontario. We'll still be able to buy Heinz ketchup; it's going to be made in the state of Ohio.

Don't give me this garbage about a transition. This is a serious issue. It needs a serious plan. If you don't have one, step aside. We've got a plan. We'll—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. That'll do.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What the Leader of the Opposition needs to also acknowledge is that there are 460,900 net new jobs in Ontario since 2009.

Interjection.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That's true.

It is very important that the Leader of the Opposition acknowledge the successes. Our plan plays to those strengths. I understand that there are changes in the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The member from Leeds–Grenville will come to order. The member from Prince Edward–Hastings will come to order. The member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex will come to order.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I understand that there is a change in our economy, but that change is bringing business and bringing companies to Ontario. There are changes happening in terms of companies leaving, but there is an exchange.

Green Arc Tire Manufacturing in St. Mary's, Ontario, an auto supplies manufacturer, is opening North America's largest tire remanufacturing plant: 340 jobs. Gizeh Verpackungen in Brantford, a plastics manufacturer: 50 to 70 new positions. There are jobs coming, and we have to create that environment so that that will continue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: We've lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs. That's a net loss. That is a hollowing out of our manufacturing sector. That is a weakening of the middle class of Ontario, and I can't understand—I cannot fathom—this Pollyanna attitude that you have.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, come to order.

Mr. Tim Hudak: —said that manufacturing job losses were a myth. Now she shrugs it off and says, “Well, Speaker, it’s just a transition.” You tell that to the families in Leamington, Ontario, who’ve got no jobs to go to, come next year. You tell the folks at John Deere. It’s a sad state of affairs when Ontario’s leading export today is manufacturing jobs going across the border to the US.

We cleared the path. We said, “Put your plan on the table.” You’ve got no plan. You’re driving up hydro rates; you’re putting in new red tape every day; you’re increasing taxes. Your plan is not working. It’s time to actually clear the decks of this government and bring in a new plan to restore hope, restore optimism and restore our middle class. You’ve got no plan—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think that if the Leader of the Opposition spoke to the Ford employees in Oakville, where we’ve invested \$70 million to allow those 2,800 jobs to be preserved and to allow Ford to compete globally, that the families in Oakville would be very, very positive about our plan.

I know that the Leader of the Opposition is having a town hall in Leamington, I think, in the area in the next couple of days. I know that he’s going to try to claim that there is only doom and gloom, that there is no opportunity for the possibility of success in going forward. I know that his member who was at the meeting last Friday has since said that that meeting was not worthwhile.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that we have been on the ground in Leamington. We understand that families are suffering. We are working with the community. There are possibilities there, and it would be a very good idea for the Leader of the Opposition and his members to work with the community rather than stirring up negativity. That’s not the way to make success.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Rural Affairs will come to order, the Minister of the Environment will come to order and the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will come to order.

New question.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier and her lack of a plan for jobs. There was a story about President Truman, where they told Truman to go in and give Congress help. Truman said, “All I have to do is tell them the facts, and they’ll think it’s help.” Premier, 300,000 fewer manufacturing jobs in our province—you’re hollowing out the middle class. Ontario is last in growth in all of Canada when it comes to income.

My Ontario will always lead Canada. My Ontario is one of hope; it’s of opportunity. It’s where we’re bringing good jobs to the province, not sending them across the border.

The Ontario we’ve always known was the leader, the best place for work. Now we’re at the back of the pack. You call that a myth? You call that a mere transition? Do your ideological blinders prohibit you from understanding the challenges that we’re facing in the province of Ontario?

So is it simply globalization, or can you tell me why, Premier, that Ontario, under the Liberals, is last in growth of income of all 10 provinces? How did we go from first to the back of the pack?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I’m sure that the Leader of the Opposition would like to, in his argument, explain how we’ve achieved 460,000-plus net new jobs since 2009. We’ve done that by making investments in businesses, by playing to our strengths, by creating a competitive environment so that businesses come to the province. I’m—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That will do.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I did not get quiet so any member can continue the dialogue, including the Minister of Finance and the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. I hope you’ve noticed that I’m mentioning your ridings, which means that if you use up your time, you’re gone.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I’m not suggesting that our work is done. Obviously, there is more to be done, and the recovery has not been in this jurisdiction or other jurisdictions as quick, as fast, as we would have liked it to be, Mr. Speaker. But the people at Ericsson Canada, Toyota, Ford, GM, Green Arc Tire Manufacturing, Gizeh, Newterra, Pillar5, Lambton Conveyor, Pavaco Plastics, NASG Canada—all of those companies have benefited from investments and support from this government. We are working with those companies. Jobs are being created. That is our plan, and it is working.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I quoted Harry Truman, and she quotes Bobby McFerrin. She says, “Don’t worry; be happy. Things are just doing great across the province of Ontario.” The problem is, Premier, that’s simply not the reality.

We’re down 300,000 manufacturing jobs. We actually have the lowest wage-growth of any province in Canada. Facts are stubborn things, Premier, but these are the facts that families are facing each and every day.

I’ll give you two more examples. You referenced GM. GM had made the Camaro in Oshawa. Now the Camaro is going to be made in the state of Michigan. Caterpillar had made their equipment in London, Ontario. That equipment is now made in Indiana.

The point I’m making, Premier, that the Liberal benches don’t seem to grasp: These products are still being made, they’re still being sold, they’re still being

bought, but they're no longer being made in the great province of Ontario. Why does that keep happening over and over and over again?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

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Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Why has the opposition party not supported our efforts to support the auto sector, Mr. Speaker? Why has the opposition party not supported our regional economic development plans? Why is the opposition not working with us to get the Supporting Small Businesses Act passed, the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, the Local Food Act—

Interjection.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That happened. We got that passed—and the Waste Reduction Act? Why is the opposition not working with us to get those pieces of legislation passed that will create jobs?

I understand that it is the job of the opposition to challenge us. I understand that, Mr. Speaker. But it is also the job of the opposition to be consistent. If they are interested in job creation, they should support us on those pieces of legislation that are going to create jobs in the province. I look for that support.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: But the problem, Premier, is you're creating jobs in Michigan. You know what? I think you missed this point. Michigan has now passed the province of Ontario in auto production. We had been the leaders, the chief jurisdiction, top of the pile when it came to auto production in North America. Michigan blew by us, and why did that happen? Because you've doubled energy rates in the province of Ontario. You've increased taxes. You've hollowed out our middle class. You pile on more and more red tape, and you're more interested in kissing the ring of Al Gore, whose policies have driven our hydro rates through the roof.

Who do I put on top? Ontario workers, families who need jobs. You can appease Al Gore all you want to; I'm going to stand with the working families in the province who want good jobs and strong manufacturing jobs. That's where we stand. Why don't you?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As I remind members on an ongoing basis, when I ask for quiet and it does get quiet, it's not the moment for you to inject.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

What we know about the plan of the Leader of the Opposition is that we would lose 10,000 education workers in this province; we would fire 2,000 health care workers. There would be a cut-and-slash regime in this province,

much the way we had a cut-and-slash regime when he was in cabinet previously.

I do not believe that in order to have a strong and aspirational Ontario, we have to sacrifice our environmental protection. I do not believe that having a strong and aspirational Ontario means that we have to undermine the relationship between organized labour and government and declare war on the people who have made sure that our workplaces have been safe and have developed those protections over years. That is what the opposition would do. They would gut unionized labour, they would fire people out of the public service and they would cut and slash—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Minister of Community and Social Services will come to order, and the member from Nepean—Carleton will come to order.

New question.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question to the Premier: Next week, the government will announce another long-term energy plan. Since the last plan was introduced, the public has seen their electricity bills surge with private power contracts—cancelled and otherwise. Why should they believe that this plan will be any different?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Energy is going to want to speak to this in the supplementary, but what I would say to the member for Toronto—Danforth—because I know in his career he has been very, very supportive of clean energy; he has been supportive of conservation. I hope that when the long-term energy plan comes out next week and he sees the focus on conservation that we are going to entrench in that plan, he will be supportive, because I think it speaks to many of the core values that he has held in the past and core values that I think have been held by the NDP in the past. So I hope that he will see that and he will be able to support our long-term energy plan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Boy, if you'd listened to us earlier, we'd have much lower electricity bills.

The government has claimed multiple times to have a long-term plan for electricity. But the plans always seem to change, and Ontarians have the bills to prove it—a billion dollars for cancelled private power deals in Oakville and Mississauga; \$180 million for unneeded new nuclear reactors; \$900 million worth of contracts signed for nuclear refurbishment for a contract that doesn't even have a business case presented.

Why should people believe that this government will have a plan that will work for Ontarians when frankly your plans haven't worked for a decade?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I fear that if we had listened to them, we would have had no rebuilt transmission, Mr. Speaker. There would have been no investments into the system and there actually wouldn't have been a plan.

We do have a plan. What we know is that the NDP, this version of the NDP, has opposed nuclear. They've opposed wind and solar, they've opposed gas—they've opposed pretty much everything that we've put forward, which is why I said maybe, when we bring forward the long-term energy plan with conservation as a lead element, they might support that. But there has been no plan, surprisingly, coming from those quarters. We've had the plan, we've made the investments, and that will be reflected in our long-term energy plan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I wouldn't exactly call that an answer.

Families and businesses in Ontario are paying the highest electricity rates in Canada—nearly twice as high as their neighbours in Manitoba. The fact is, the government's electricity plans have helped private power companies get paid for cancelled contracts, but they've left Ontarians with massive bills. What assurances can the Premier offer to people that the new plan is not just another public relations exercise from a government that's left the public carrying the bills for 10 years of misadventure?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The member will be able to see the long-term energy plan this coming Monday. It's forward-looking. It is very sensitive to the ratepayer.

With respect to private developers, the member from Toronto—Danforth has made it quite clear that he condemns private investment in power generation in Ontario. But when the NDP last formed government, they signed nine private power generating contracts for natural gas plants in a five-year span, totalling over 400 megawatts of generation.

The fact is that Ontario has a hybrid system, a healthy mix of publicly owned generation and private investments that help drive our economy and create tens of thousands of jobs in Ontario. The NDP plan to eliminate private investment in Ontario's energy sector would not only cause thousands of job losses, but would also result in higher hydro rates for Ontario's families and businesses. Mr. Speaker, he's an ideologue and he doesn't know how to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

PUBLIC SECTOR COMPENSATION

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. Families are feeling squeezed by tough times and they're worried about the future. But at the same time as families keep getting asked to tighten their belts, public sector CEO pay keeps going up.

Since 2010, the New Democrats have been saying it's time to put a hard cap on public sector CEO salaries. In September 2012, the Minister of Finance said the government would move forward with that cap. He said, and I quote him, "It will work to bring some of the overly generous compensation packages back to reality."

Does the Premier agree it's time to put a hard cap on public sector CEO pay?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As the member knows, the NDP supported the budget in which we committed to examining some measures to manage compensation costs, including considering hard caps. That work is happening right now, and we'll be implementing new measures. We'll be bringing those forth in the next few months. I know the member of the third party understands that that was part of what we agreed to in the 2013 budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: It may have been part of the deal, but we keep waiting and waiting.

It would take the average Canadian nine years to earn \$418,000, which is twice the Premier's pay. It's pretty generous as an annual paycheck. In 2012, the Liberal government finally agreed it was time to cap public sector CEO salaries at a level two times higher than the Premier's.

The Premier has no problem telling hard-working families they'll have to get by with less. Will she agree to follow through on the commitment the government made and do it now?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've already said that we are working on this, that the measures will come forward in the next few months. But, Mr. Speaker, I want to just be clear that we have to have more than a blunt instrument as we deal with this issue, because there are sectors where there is expertise that's needed, whether we're talking about medical professionals or nuclear technicians who are vital to running the services that are needed in the province and that the system relies on. We have an obligation to make sure that those systems are run well.

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So we are doing the work, as we committed to do in the 2013 budget, Mr. Speaker. Those initiatives will come forward in the next few months. I hope that the member from the third party understands that it's going to be very important that we do this in a sophisticated way so that we have the expertise that's needed in every sector across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Michael Prue: Most Ontario families haven't seen a raise in years, and every time they open the newspaper, they see billions wasted on gas plants, eHealth and Ornge. Will the Premier take a small step tomorrow to show some respect for their money and for the plight many of them find themselves in and support the bill to cap public sector CEO pay?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, we've already said that we are working on a plan and some ini-

tatives that we're going to bring forth. That's what we said we were going to do in the 2013 budget, and that is what we were doing.

As I have said, we need to make sure that whatever we bring forward is not a blunt instrument that doesn't recognize that there are needs in different sectors. We need to look at how this can work so that we get the expertise that we need, whether it's, as I say, nuclear technicians or within the medical field.

I agree that we need to put in place some controls on executive compensation. That absolutely needs to happen. That's why it was in the 2013 budget. We'll bring those initiatives forward, and my hope is that the member from the third party will be able to work with us as we introduce those initiatives.

CHRIS MAZZA

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier.

Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Health admitted that she was surprised that Chris Mazza was back on her payroll. Not long ago, the minister called Chris Mazza a liar. She fired him from his job as CEO of Ornge. She called in the OPP to investigate him. She knows that he's under investigation by the College of Physicians and Surgeons, and she knows that he put front-line Ornge staff and patients at risk. Now he's working in the emergency ward at the Thunder Bay hospital. When asked yesterday how she would feel if he was working on her in that emergency ward, she refused to answer. Yet this minister claims she has no authority to keep this man off the public payroll and away from patients.

I ask the Premier: If the Minister of Health has no authority to ensure this man doesn't get anywhere near the public payroll, who does?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think that this question was answered very well yesterday by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, and I know she may want to comment in the supplementary, but I just want to say that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care made it very clear yesterday how these hiring processes are done.

The comment that I want to add is that I know that the member opposite is not suggesting that we somehow find a way to go around due process. There is due process, and there have obviously been processes that have been begun because of this person's previous activities. I'm sure that the member opposite is not suggesting that we would somehow contravene that due process that is there for the protection of every citizen in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Actually, Speaker, I am suggesting precisely that. If the chief of staff at the Thunder Bay hospital doesn't know enough not to put this man on the payroll, then the Premier should overrule that decision. That's what I'm saying.

A senior Ornge executive revealed that while under the employ of Chris Mazza, he became addicted to Percocet, and that it was Chris Mazza, as the CEO of Ornge, who prescribed his addiction by prescribing those drugs. That's Chris Mazza. That's the kind of reputation he has: putting front-line Ornge staff at risk, mismanaging millions of dollars, putting the Ontario taxpayers into debt to the tune of multi-millions.

I say to the Premier again: This man has no place on the payroll of the province of Ontario, let alone in the emergency ward of one of our hospitals.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Speaker, I watched the party opposite stand up and cheer a line of argument that would lead to a very, very dangerous set of precedents, I believe. I don't know whether we're getting insight into the kind of society that the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario would have in place, a society where—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke will come to order. The Minister of Energy, the Minister of Rural Affairs and the Attorney General will come to order. The member from Nepean-Carleton will come to order.

I remembered them all, and I've told a few of you more than once. My next time is a warning.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That would be a society where the College of Physicians and Surgeons would no longer have the authority that they have now. It would be a society where due process would be thrown aside, and an individual politician—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland-Quinte West will come to order. Last time.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —would make a decision about another individual without the benefit of due process. I don't believe that's the society that we've built over the last 150 years, and I don't think it's a society that would protect the interests of the population of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. New question.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the Premier. For the last year, the government has been suggesting that a deal with Cliffs was a done deal. But a year ago, a VP at Cliffs, Bill Boor, told the Sudbury Chamber of Commerce that they were concerned about progress the Liberal government was making on the Ring of Fire. In

March 2012, Boor said Cliffs needed to sign a definitive document before it could develop the Black Thor in the Ring of Fire.

Did the government sign a definitive document with Cliffs, and what commitments were in that definitive document?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I appreciate the question. Certainly, as the member knows and people in the region know, the Ring of Fire continues to be a project that we're working very, very diligently on. In fact, we have set up development corporation in which we're trying to engage both industry, protected First Nations and the federal government.

In terms of your specific question, though, let's be clear: Indeed, we have had very significant conversations with a number of companies, and that does include Cliffs. In terms of the details of those discussions, they are, for commercial reasons, very confidential. I think that it is important that that remains the case, particularly as the company itself has announced a suspension, a delay, rather than ceasing their interest in the project.

May I say, Mr. Speaker, we want to continue to focus on moving forward; we want to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Michael Gravelle:—continue to focus on developing the Ring of Fire and doing all the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I stand; you sit.

Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Mantha: All right, Mr. Speaker, let's try this again. So the Liberal government pushed Cliffs away from Ontario. Cliffs was raising concerns over a year ago. We don't know what commitments were made to Cliffs, and we don't know whether the Liberal government lived up to its end of the bargain.

In March 2013, Cliffs was still pursuing a definitive document. Did the government sign a definitive document with Cliffs, and if not, why not?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, what we all do know is that indeed we've been engaged in very significant conversations with a number of companies, and that certainly very much includes Cliffs. We're going to continue to carry on those discussions.

What we also know is that we are committed to moving forward with making decisions related to some of the key aspects of the Ring of Fire. That certainly very much includes infrastructure, and that's why we have formed a development corporation and are bringing so many different organizations and partners to the table. Obviously, we hope that includes First Nations, the federal government and industry.

But the fact is, certainly it would not be in any way appropriate or fair to anybody, and I think the member knows that, to be talking in terms of the details that the member seems to think are so crucial. What's crucial is moving forward with the Ring of Fire development on the First Nations consultations, which are so vital, and, may I say, on forming the development corporation—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you

Hon. Michael Gravelle:—which will be the key—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Stop the clock.

I will remind the minister: When I stand, you sit. Did you forget? You forgot.

New question.

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HYDRO RATES

Mr. Steven Del Duca: My question today is for the Minister of Energy. Speaker, I'm sure many members in this House will agree that one of the most common questions that we receive from our constituents is regarding their hydro bills. It certainly is one of the most frequent calls that I receive in my constituency office in Vaughan.

As we know, hydro bills have many different components, and it can be difficult for folks in our communities to understand what each part represents. I also hear from constituents wondering how they can better manage their energy consumption, to reduce their bills and to reduce the impact of their energy usage on the environment.

As this is something that we all hear regularly from our constituents, I feel it's important for Ontarians to have a better understanding of the province's electricity system. I'm wondering if the minister could please provide the House with an update regarding any initiatives being undertaken to increase energy literacy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member for his timely question. The need to promote energy literacy is something that we've heard from Ontarians from across the province during consultations for the long-term energy plan, and it is an important priority for the Minister of Energy.

In fact, just yesterday morning I was at the launch of the Hydro One Electricity Discovery Centre at the University of Toronto. Members may remember seeing the discovery centre at the International Plowing Match and the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair. The discovery centre is a fully mobile customer education tool designed to engage and educate consumers. Mr. Speaker, it's one of the several initiatives we are introducing as part of our commitment to keeping Ontarians informed about the electricity system.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I thank the minister for both his response and for the outstanding job he's doing on behalf of the people of Ontario.

This definitely does sound like an extremely worthwhile initiative. Promoting energy literacy will help Ontarians improve their understanding of how our system works. It will help them understand how their energy choices affect their bills and our environment and it will also help them better manage their own energy consumption. I understand the need to promote energy literacy among Ontarians is also a message that we've all heard from the Environmental Commissioner, Gord Miller.

Given the complexity of the modern system, and the amount of correspondence that I and many others receive from constituents who are confused about their bills, helping the public better understand Ontario's electricity system has never been more important.

Can the minister please inform the House regarding what kind of information the discovery centre will provide and how I can make that information available to the constituents in my community?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The discovery centre provides the opportunity for visitors to learn about Hydro One and Ontario's electricity system in an engaging and interactive way. Specifically, visitors can learn about electrical safety, important tips on managing electricity use and costs, how the electricity system is modernizing—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound will come to order.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —and the benefits of investing to keep it up to date for future generations of consumers.

The mobile format of the discovery centre brings interactive and engaging exhibits to consumers' fingertips. To ensure this information is available to all Ontarians, Hydro One will work with any MPP to bring the discovery centre to their own riding. I invite all members to take advantage of this excellent resource.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question as well is to the Minister of Energy. Good morning, Minister. Earlier today you confirmed, I think, what is the worst-kept secret in Ontario right now, and that is that you are going to announce the long-term energy plan the day before the Premier is set to appear again before the justice committee probing the gas plants, so it's an obvious distraction.

I note also that last week—

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Calm down.

I note also that last week, in speaking to the press, the minister suggested his long-term plan would be "short-term in nature." With that contradiction alone, it is very hard to take this minister's long-term energy plan seriously, so let's consider what the last LTEP had in it. It had a rigid adherence to wind energy that has cost this province dearly, particularly the ratepayer. Then it planned for two gas plants, which they later cancelled for a political decision. Now we have OPG asking for another 30% rate increase.

Speaker, I ask the minister a very serious question: Is there any reason that Heinz and others are leaving this province—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Sometimes questions come from the opposition that are quite uninformed. I'm pleased that the critic chose to use the Heinz example because the Heinz facility in Leamington, Ontario has a seven-mega-

watt cogeneration plant located on-site. It's generating its own electricity under our system at very, very cheap prices. They're not on the grid. It's uninformed, as all of her comments and questions are uninformed.

Mr. Speaker, we've come from a deficit that they created to a surplus. We've come from dirty generation to clean generation. Their record is a disgrace. Our record is laudable.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The truth hurts; the facts hurt deeper.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Order. I can't hear when you heckle either.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, that's my job. You're not getting the last word either.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, you're not. If you say it again, I will warn you. I don't need challenges here.

Supplementary, please.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: He bungles and he blusters this entire energy file, but if he won't take my word for it, why don't we talk about the report released yesterday by the Canadian vehicle—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Sudbury, come to order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm just going to let their quotes speak for themselves: "More recently ... a combination of factors—not the least of which is revised policy goals—have converged to make Ontario rates higher than competing jurisdictions. For example, electricity costs for a typical large-scale assembly operation in the US South or Midwest are estimated to be as much as \$5 million lower than those in Ontario, a penalty that is now well-known to decision-makers.... For example, Toronto large power users pay 123% more than Chicago customers, 50% more than Nashville and 37% more than Detroit."

Why are they running businesses out of this province?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Durham will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from—

Mr. Jim McDonnell: Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yes, I know what it is. I'm giving you time to contemplate.

The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You guys haven't gotten the message. I'll have to be even tougher. Please. Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, again, the premises of her questions are very false.

We talk about Heinz; we talk about energy prices in the United States. They blame the closure of Heinz on energy. At the same time, two Heinz manufacturing facilities were closed the same day in the United States. So they want to use the United States as a good example, but they have no credibility in terms of what they're saying.

Mr. Speaker, we have created a reliable system of electricity. We've made huge investments in this sector because of their deficit. Yes, it put pressure on prices, but in the meantime, we have created programs that ameliorate the pricing. For industrial consumers, we've created the Industrial Conservation Initiative; we've created the Industrial Electricity Incentive program; we've created the Northern Industrial Electricity Rate Program.

With respect to Cliffs, we put something on the table that was very, very agreeable and acceptable with respect to energy.

MIDWIFERY

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la première ministre.

Speaker, this morning, Ontario midwives launched a human rights challenge against this government because of two decades of gender discrimination. Ontario midwives are paid 52% of what they should be earning. For years, midwives, the families they care for and the NDP have asked this government to take action on this most basic equity issue. We know that the government can talk a good game about the value of midwives and the good care that they provide, but can she tell us why she has ignored her obligation to pay equity for this female-dominated, essential health care provider group?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, what I can do is tell you that we do tremendously value the work of midwives.

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That is why we've got three times as many women getting care from midwives now than we had just 10 years ago. That's why we've increased funding to midwifery programs fivefold since we were elected. That's why we've increased the number of spots in our midwife training: because we believe that women who want care from a midwife should have access to that care. But our commitment does not end with those investments. We have increased compensation to midwives by 25% over the past 10 years. Our commitment to midwives is strong and remains strong.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: What the minister just told me is that she is comfortable with men being paid 48% more than women to do the exact same work. As midwives tell

us, to devalue midwifery services is to devalue the people for whom midwives provide services: women and their families.

Today, Ontario midwives are being asked to work for free from July 1 to December 31. Midwives are angry and frustrated, and after years of being ignored by this government, they had no choice. They had to pursue legal action for this government to follow its own law.

Is the minister going to fight, in the courts, these women who care for 20,000 women and newborns each year, or is she going to respect her pay-equity obligations?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have witnessed first-hand the extraordinary care provided by midwives. On two occasions, I have been present at the birth of a grandchild in the care of a midwife. Our Premier has had two of her three children delivered by midwives. Our commitment and our respect is enormous.

I think it's important that the member opposite get her facts straight. We provided the first compensation increase to midwives since they were established in 1994. In 2005, midwives received a 20% to 29% salary increase and, every year from 2006 to 2011, a 2% compensation increase. I confess I do not understand why the midwives are going this route, but I am very, very proud of our record, and I will defend our record.

ENVIRONMENT INDUSTRY

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Today, November 27, is the 2013 Ontario Environment Industry Day. Established in 1991, the Ontario Environment Industry Association, otherwise known as ONEIA, is the business association representing the interests of the environment industry in Ontario. This not-for-profit environment business association is governed by a board of directors and has approximately 200 member companies.

The Ontario environment industry sector represents over 40% of Canada's environmental industry and generates an estimated \$8 billion in annual revenues. This industry is important to the future of Ontario's environmental and economic health.

Speaker, through you, would the Minister of the Environment please share with this House more about ONEIA and how they fit in Ontario's environmental and economic plans for the future?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Well, the question is a very timely one, and I'm pleased to acknowledge the 2013 Ontario Environment Industry Day.

This is an interesting figure: With more than \$8 billion in annual revenues, including more than \$1 billion in exports, the Ontario environment industry sector is making an important contribution to Ontario's environmental health, the quality of life of its citizens and our economic strength. We want to see that continue under the government's plan to invest in people, build strong infrastructure and support a dynamic and innovative business climate.

The Ministry of the Environment will continue to build on the long-standing relationship we have with ONEIA through events like the Environment Industry Day and our supportive research projects like the Ready to Grow initiative and its follow-up, Still Ready to Grow. ONEIA has had a positive and constructive relationship with our government and is interested in continuing to work with the province on strategies to support and grow Ontario's environment industry.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you again, Minister, for the update. This established partnership between the Ministry of the Environment and the Ontario Environment Industry Association is a great example of how this government is following through with its economic plan to partner with key sectors of the economy.

This plan will encourage technologies which will help protect our land, our air and our water. The results will build on Ontario's environmental strengths, as well as contributing to our economic and competitive strengths.

Speaker, through you, would the Minister of the Environment further elaborate to this House how our relationship with ONEIA will help protect our environment and foster the development of environmentally friendly infrastructure?

Hon. James J. Bradley: The member has appropriately asked an important question—strategically as well; he probably stole the next question from the official opposition—so I am pleased to answer the question.

When municipalities need to upgrade water or sewage treatment, who are they going to turn to? When industries need to abate air or water pollution, who are they going to turn to? When producers of goods need to set up a recycling system, who are they going to turn to?

All these organizations, with all these challenges, are going to turn to a company that is a member of the Ontario Environmental Industry Association. It's important that we have associations such as this in Ontario, and I look forward to continuing to work with Ontario's environmental industry to ensure that we have a healthy environment and a clean, prosperous future for our province.

Remember to attend the reception today.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question is for the Premier. Premier, much to the dismay of Ontario taxpayers and ratepayers alike, your government is facing lawsuits by two companies whose wind projects were cancelled by your government as a result of a 2011 pre-election moratorium on offshore wind development.

We have learned that Trillium Power Wind Corp. has filed a \$2.25-billion lawsuit and that WindStream Energy is seeking damages in the amount of almost half a billion dollars. If the government loses these lawsuits, it could cost taxpayers \$2.7 billion on top of the \$1.1 billion it cost to cancel the gas plants. And the irony in this is that

WindStream was motivated to seek damages because of your gas plant fiasco.

Premier, given the pushback against offshore wind in an election year, was the decision to put a moratorium on offshore another Liberal seat-saver scheme, and will the Liberal Party be picking up these costs if indeed these lawsuits are successful?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I hear the question, but what I don't hear is any consistency on this front at all, because my understanding is that this party is against wind altogether, that this member would have us cancel all the projects.

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I hear the heckling from the member for Renfrew.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is warned, the member from Prince Edward–Hastings is warned and the member from Durham is warned.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I hear the heckling that they don't support wind power at all, and that's exactly my point, Mr. Speaker. They don't support green power. They would cancel all of the contracts. We believe that green renewable power is the right way to go. We believe that phasing out all of the coal plants and banning that generation in the future is a good thing to do. They don't believe that, but they would have all those contracts cancelled, and that's not consistent with the member's question.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Clearly, Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you, Speaker.

Clearly, that answer was practised and they were waiting for this, because this truly is another example of Liberal mismanagement.

Back to the Premier: In 2011, during an election year, the Minister of Energy contradicted the then original claim of the Minister of Natural Resources and declared that there was not enough scientific evidence to proceed with offshore development. Now, in 2013, study after study—even your own University of Waterloo study—is demonstrating an association between proximity to turbines and negative health impacts.

So where are we going with this? The Liberal government chooses to cite evidence of one example and yet you ignore evidence on the other hand. Premier, will your government just stop all of this madness and call for an immediate moratorium on all construction of turbines?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Attorney General will come to order.

Premier.

1130

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

To the accusation that I practised the answer, I never could have predicted such an inconsistent question. So actually, Mr. Speaker, I could not have practised the answer to that question.

Let me just say this: The member opposite, on the one hand, is berating us because there is a legal case because we have cancelled projects—and I'm not going to comment on the specifics of that—but on the other hand, she is saying we should cancel all of the projects, thereby potentially incurring more legal situations. So there is no consistency in this party's approach to energy. There is no consistency in this party's approach to the process of siting infrastructure. We are going to continue to work to put a better process in place, but we are not going to be looking to the inconsistency of the Conservatives for guidance on that, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

New question.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan will come to order—last time.

THUNDER BAY GENERATING STATION

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Common Voice Northwest was here at Queen's Park yesterday raising concerns with the recent announcement your government made for a partial biomass conversion of the Thunder Bay coal plant. Their report says that the biomass supply approved is far too small to supply the energy required by northwestern Ontario, even in the short run. How come you can come up with \$1.1 billion to cancel two gas plants in southern Ontario and you can't deal with the issue of Thunder Bay?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I appreciate the question from the member. I did have the opportunity for a short while yesterday to speak to some of the delegation, including Iain Angus, who thanked me for the decision of doing it. He did raise some questions with respect to supply of the biomass. He came up with some very positive suggestions on how that can be met, and we are certainly going to take those into account.

Mr. Speaker, our energy plan for northwestern Ontario is very, very solid. It's extensive. It involves \$2.5 billion of investments that we're projecting. The energy security of Thunder Bay is absolutely secure. They're going to have a plant. We're going to extend the life of that plant, the biogas component, if it's required. They have the electricity when they need it, where they need it, Mr. Speaker. It's extremely reliable.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, quite frankly, what you're saying is pretty shocking, because you should know as Minister of Energy that northwestern Ontario is

very different when it comes to supply and ability to utilize the grid than anywhere else in the province of Ontario. What's happening in Thunder Bay is that that used to be a plant that was able to provide electricity to the northwest. Now what you're going to have is a peaking plant which is going to produce far less power than what the region needs.

I ask you again: Why is it that your priority was to spend \$1.1 billion to save a few seats in Mississauga and Oakville but you're not prepared to support the people of Thunder Bay in the northwest?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, this absolutely is an NDP question. They're asking us to make investments that are not required. We're making the necessary investments. We're relying on the experience of the Independent Electricity System Operator with respect to reliability. It's the right solution at the right time for Thunder Bay. They will not have to worry about their energy generation, Mr. Speaker.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: For the record, this question has only been moderately practised.

Ma question est pour le ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi, l'honorable Eric Hoskins. Speaker, as you will know, our government has officially launched its youth jobs strategy. This is especially important to families in my own riding of Etobicoke North. The government's announcement came after a series of consultations which brought together local business leaders, employers, not-for-profits, educators, labour and, of course, the youth themselves. These discussions provided a local perspective about the needs of the various stakeholders and participants, and directly influenced the design of this important program, the youth jobs strategy of October 16.

Speaker, would the minister please inform this chamber when young people in my own riding of Etobicoke North and, of course, beyond in Ontario can begin to start accessing these funds?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you to the member from Etobicoke North for this great question.

These funds, a \$295-million investment by the government over the next two years, will create 30,000 jobs across the province for young people. With the youth jobs strategy fully launched now, all funds are open and are receiving applications.

We have a Youth Skills Connection Fund which will see the first deadlines in December and the funds disbursed in early 2014.

We have a Strategic Community Entrepreneurship fund, which will have a series of application windows that will see intake and fund disbursing running all the way through to January 2015; a high school outreach program accepting applications now, with applicants receiving notification next month; and Summer Company, designed to help students run a summer business. The application process is open all the way through to next May.

Each fund has a distinct application process; it's important that those interested go to our youth and jobs strategy website, ontario.ca/youthjobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I commend the minister on this program, his outreach to youth, and the multi-faceted nature of these disbursements. I, of course, Speaker, will do my part in my own sphere of influence to publicize the fact that our youth job strategy is under way, that applications are being received, and that youth in my riding will be able to apply now.

The young people of Etobicoke North also recently heard about the youth employment fund and the great opportunities that it also offers. Youth unemployment is a significant concern for parents and families, and this program is welcome, encouraging and much-needed news for them.

May I respectfully ask the minister to please advise this House: How can young people access the youth employment fund?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm very pleased to be able to report to the member and all members of this House that we've had great success with the youth employment fund. After just two months, 3,721 young people have active job placements through the youth employment fund. Ultimately, this fund will benefit 25,000 young people overall.

This program allows young people the opportunity to gain valuable work experience while earning an income. Youth and employers can apply for this fund by reaching out to our local Employment Ontario service providers. In the member's riding of Etobicoke North, young people can turn to the Community MicroSkills Development Centre on Vulcan Street, Humber College and the YMCA at 1530 Albion Road. Those are some of the areas where they can apply for this fund.

We're proud of the work that is being done. We encourage that member and all members to encourage young people in their ridings to access this very significant and successful program.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Premier. Mr. Speaker, as you'll recall, almost eight months ago, A.O. Smith, the water heater manufacturer which has been our economic cornerstone in Fergus for over 100 years, announced it would be ending manufacturing there, putting 350 people out of work. These lost jobs are not a myth; they are real, and they are going to the United States.

This was a devastating blow to our community, but we carry on, expecting the provincial government to do its part to establish a competitive economic climate and encourage the creation of new jobs.

This fall, our caucus was prepared to work with the government to clear the backlog of legislation before the House. But we had one request: that the government

bring forward a jobs plan. My question to the Premier is simple: When will the government be tabling its jobs plan?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate that the member opposite has raised the issue of A.O. Smith. I know he has been working very hard with his community on this issue. He knows my own personal attachment, as well, with the company: My great-uncle worked there for 50 years, from the floor all the way up into management. There's nothing more important to this small community of Fergus than to be able to grow their economy and provide jobs for people going forward.

We are working hard. The member opposite knows that there are measures in place, and the government has been active with a number of companies. We're hoping that there will be some good news in the foreseeable future. Of course, for the employees that unfortunately lost their jobs, we have set up an action centre that provides them with job search support as well as retraining opportunities.

It's a community that's very important in southwestern Ontario. It's very important to this government, and as I mentioned, it's very important to me personally as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: As far back as 2005, I was ringing the alarm bells in this House about the competitiveness challenges faced by Ontario's industry and the need to develop an action plan to save manufacturing jobs. Mr. Speaker, they ignored us.

1140

Since then, we have lost more than 300,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs—38,000 since the Premier was sworn in last February. This number includes the 350 people who lost their jobs at A.O. Smith in Fergus. These job losses are more than just statistics. With the Christmas season soon to be upon us, we're talking about thousands of families who worry about their future, with good reason, and they see a provincial government without a clue of what to do. If the government can't come up with a jobs plan of their own, will they adopt ours?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, here's where I need to disagree with the member opposite. We have a jobs plan. The problem is that the PCs didn't support it. You didn't support it back in 2008 when we provided support to the auto sector. If it had gone your way, GM and Chrysler would have left the country.

You didn't support us last year when we created the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund, which has created and retained more than 7,000 jobs in the last year alone. You voted against it.

You didn't support us for the youth jobs strategy, which we just heard a moment ago has resulted in more

than 3,000 placements already, with a \$300-million investment over the next couple of years. We have a jobs plan; the problem is that you refused to support it.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Be seated, please.

New question.

FIREFIGHTERS

Ms. Cindy Forster: For years, New Democrats have strongly supported legislation in which certain occupational-related diseases are presumed to be job-related for WSIB purposes. Along with the Ontario firefighters who are here today, we agree it's time to add testicular, skin, multiple melanoma, breast, lung and prostate cancer to that list of diseases to be presumed. In fact, the government has told firefighters that they agree, too. Will the Premier actually change the existing legislation to add these diseases, or is she simply making commitments that she has no plans to change?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member opposite for asking this important question. I again welcome all the very hard-working firefighters who are here in the assembly today.

Applause.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I thank all the firefighters for the hard work they do in making sure that our communities remain safe. That's why I'm very proud to stand here today. It was in 2007 that our government was the very first government to bring in presumptive legislation in the province of Ontario, recognizing eight different cancers and heart diseases—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Premier, what we need is action, not standing ovations.

The reality is that firefighters are exposed to many toxic substances in the course of their duties and, as a result, they face higher risks of certain cancers. This new legislation would build on presumptive legislation from 2007 that deemed a number of other cancers, like oesophageal and colorectal, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, leukemia, and heart injury within 24 hours after fighting a fire deemed occupation-related. I ask again, is the Premier prepared to pay more than lip service to the firefighters so that these brave men and women who face dangers day in and day out on their jobs can be treated with respect and dignity, and when will she do it?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I thank the member again. I want to thank the member from Vaughan for bringing forward Bill 81, which actually suggests that we add six additional cancers to the presumptive list. I thank the member for Vaughan for his leadership on this very important issue.

Speaker, I want to assure you and, through you, all the members of this Legislature that we're working very closely with members of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association. The Premier had the opportunity to

speak with them and show our commitment to our firefighters that we'll continue to work hard to make sure that all firefighters are safe at their workplaces, that they are fully protected, to ensure they can continue their job. I'm very proud of our very positive, constructive working relationship with our firefighters, and we'll continue to work with them in making sure that they're safe every single day.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On a point of order before our deferred vote: Let's make it quick, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

VISITORS

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'd like to welcome to the chamber today and to Queen's Park Valerie Miles and Steve Carson, realtors from the Renfrew County Real Estate Board, in my riding. Thank you for coming.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I wanted to also introduce to the Legislative Assembly some guests who were in the members' gallery; they are there no longer. They're firefighters from my region: James Taylor, Dan Boyer, Kane Demers, Mike Scarangella, Ryan Outtrim, Mark Train and Ryan Coburn.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'd like to welcome guests from the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association joining us this morning for question period: Brett Gibson and Steve Mair, from the Waterloo Professional Fire Fighters Association. Welcome to Queen's Park.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I just want to correct the record, to the question from the member from Timmins. I mentioned in my supplementary a biogas plant. It should read "biomass plant."

VISITORS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'd quickly like to introduce a friend of mine, and the mayor from Strathroy-Caradoc, Joanne Vanderheyden, who is here today at Queen's Park, and other members of Ontario Good Roads Association.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to correct my record this morning. In my speech about Bill 133, I, in error, forgot—I promised her that I would mention her and her hard work. She's a senior policy analyst with the office of my leader, Tim Hudak. I want to acknowledge the hard work of Larissa Smit.

VISITORS

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to introduce a very important spiritual leader from the town of Oakville. The

Reverend Jim Gill and his wife, Bonnie, have joined us at Queen's Park today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do want to make a point that this is a little unorthodox, because we have a rotation for introduction of guests, and I have told you that while we're doing that, I'll even go past the time in order for us to do that. This is an important cyclical thing we need to do. So from now on, I'll be a little less patient on that particular issue.

DEFERRED VOTES

STRONGER PROTECTION FOR ONTARIO CONSUMERS ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 RENFORÇANT LA PROTECTION DU CONSOMMATEUR ONTARIEN

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 55, An Act to amend the Collection Agencies Act, the Consumer Protection Act, 2002 and the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 55, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les agences de recouvrement, la Loi de 2002 sur la protection du consommateur et la Loi de 2002 sur le courtage commercial et immobilier et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1147 to 1152.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On November 26, Ms. MacCharles moved third reading of Bill 55.

All those in favour, please rise one at a time to be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.
Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Balkissoon, Bas
Barrett, Toby
Bartolucci, Rick
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bisson, Gilles
Bradley, James J.
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Dei Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
DiNovo, Cheri
Duguid, Brad
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor

Gélinas, France
Gravelle, Michael
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hatfield, Percy
Hillier, Randy
Holyday, Douglas C.
Hoskins, Eric
Hudak, Tim
Hunter, Mitzie
Jackson, Rod
Jeffrey, Linda
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff
Leone, Rob
MacCharles, Tracy
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
Mangat, Amrit
Mantha, Michael
Marchese, Rosario
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McDonnell, Jim
McKenna, Jane

Miller, Paul
Milligan, Rob E.
Milloy, John
Munro, Julia
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Nicholls, Rick
O'Toole, John
Oraziotti, David
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pettapiece, Randy
Piruzza, Teresa
Prue, Michael
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Sattler, Peggy
Schein, Jonah
Scott, Laurie
Sergio, Mario
Singh, Jagmeet
Smith, Todd
Sousa, Charles
Tabuns, Peter
Taylor, Monique
Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim

Fife, Catherine
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Forster, Cindy
Fraser, John
Gerretsen, John

McMeekin, Ted
McNaughton, Monte
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Miller, Norm

Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Yakubski, John
Yurek, Jeff
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 96; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1156 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I have two sets of guests to introduce. First of all, I would like to introduce Robb Roy and Gord Mulcahey from the North Bay firefighters, who are here today.

Later on today, we'll have Tom Hawkins, Pam Hawkins, Kayla Hawkins, Kendra Hawkins and Debbie Hawkins here. I wanted to have this opportunity to introduce them.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MARK LINDSAY

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Two years ago, a young farmer from Kars started a business on 900 acres of farmland. For Mark Lindsay, farming was his passion. He harvested corn crops, and he milked 100 cows four times a day with two robotic milking machines. He had a dream, he had a passion and he had a farm, Cranberry Creek Dairy Farms.

Last week, all of Ottawa would learn Mark had more. He had a family who adored him, friends who loved him and a farm community that respected him. He had a nickname: "Pump." Residents in Canada's largest agricultural city would get to know more about Mark's life and the impact he had on others in Kars, North Gower, and Osgoode after a tragic farming accident. We learned about Mark from their gestures, born of grief, that were so remarkable they need to be shared in this assembly.

With broken hearts, area farmers did something heartwarming, something we don't see every day, but something that reminds us of the common decency we all grew up with. His friends lined the funeral procession with tractors, even parking his favourite tractor at the funeral home. But it's what they did next that is most moving of all. In Mark's memory, and as a show of respect to his wife, Anne, and his parents, Eldon and Betty, more than 30 area farmers harvested Mark's crops.

What normally takes days took mere hours. Many said they would be back to plant crops for next year.

Farmers are the salt of the earth, Speaker, and in my community last week, in Mark's memory, they proved it yet again.

FRIENDS OF MEADOWLILY WOODS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It is my pleasure to share with the members of this Legislature an important cultural and historical event in my riding of London—Fanshawe.

As you may know, London is home to many unique and historical ecological sites, including the Meadowlily Woods community. Recently, our community celebrated the rededication of the Meadowlily bridge, which was originally built in 1911. This bridge is one of the first iron bridges built in the London area. Historically, this bridge provided a path for farmers to reach the mill and served as a crucial connection for residents travelling between the townships of Westminster and London. Earlier this month, the bridge was rededicated to the community of Meadowlily after an extensive restoration and rebuild.

Specifically, I want to recognize the Friends of Meadowlily Woods, a not-for-profit volunteer group formed in 2008. In addition to their efforts to revitalize the bridge, the group fought to safeguard the site of an ecologically substantial area in London—Fanshawe as well. It is home to 33 at-risk species, and the Friends of Meadowlily have worked tirelessly to protect this land.

This group of approximately 50 volunteers came together to save and protect. In acknowledgement of their hard work, the Friends of Meadowlily Woods were awarded the Margaret and Nicolas Hill Cultural Heritage Landscape Award by the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario.

Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Friends of Meadowlily Woods on receiving this prestigious award and for their dedication to our community. I am very proud of the creativity and passion shown in London—Fanshawe, and I'm also pleased to share this achievement with all of you here today.

HANUKKAH

Mr. Mike Colle: I rise today to wish all my constituents of the Jewish faith, and all Ontarians of the Jewish faith, a happy Hanukkah.

Today is the first day of Hanukkah. All across this province and all across the world, we celebrate the incredible bravery of the Maccabees and their courage in standing up to oppression, and the miracle of the oil, which was supposed to have lasted only one day but lasted eight days.

Today, I'm sure that all over Ontario there are all kinds of families who are going to light their first candle. They're going to prepare for the dancing of the hora, the eating of the latkes, the playing of the drierel and the lighting of the menorah which will take place.

I would also like to read a Hebrew blessing for Hanukkah.

Prayer in Hebrew.

HEINZ CLOSURE

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Some 104 years of rich history, providing thousands of jobs and a key component of the community's identity: That is what Heinz means to Leamington. I can only imagine what went through the hearts and minds of those affected by the closure announcement, the darkest day in the history of Leamington. Whether they are employees themselves, their families, tomato growers or part of the supply chain, every single member of the community will feel the loss.

At this point, no one knows the overall economic impact that this closure will have. It's estimated that thousands of supply chain jobs could be lost, with the local economy losing hundreds of millions of dollars—a heavy blow to the tomato capital of Canada.

Some may say inefficiencies and an old, tired building led to the closure, but I say we're not asking the right questions. Why has there been no real investment in equipment that would have improved efficiencies? Why were there no improvements to the overall site? Unfortunately, the policies of this Liberal government have handcuffed Heinz and many other businesses with red tape and rising energy costs.

In the aftermath of the announcement, I received countless phone calls from concerned constituents. I attended meetings with officials from all three levels of government, as well as with affected growers. Most importantly, I talked to workers themselves.

Speaker, do you know what? You can't keep a good agricultural town down. Leamington was there before Heinz opened its doors, and it will remain long after they close. Often adversity leads to creativity and innovation. Heinz didn't make Leamington; the people of Leamington made Heinz.

ROB'S RIDE

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to recognize an outstanding advocate and a local champion in my riding of Oakville.

Robert Alexander-Carew was first diagnosed with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, or IPF, in June 2011, at the young age of 39. IPF is a progressive lung disease that causes scarring of the lungs and makes it very difficult to breathe. It's estimated that up to 30,000 people in Canada are currently diagnosed with IPF. Of those, between 5,000 and 10,000 suffer from very serious IPF.

Robert was shocked at the lack of information he found out there, so he and his friends rallied together and established Rob's Ride. It's a fundraising spinning event to increase awareness of the disease and to raise money to improve its diagnosis and treatment.

This year, I was fortunate enough to participate in the second annual Rob's Ride for Pulmonary Fibrosis. Because of the incredible work, his team of supporters

was able to raise over \$20,000, and that money is going to go directly to the lung clinic at Toronto General Hospital.

September was IPF Awareness Month in Canada; November is Lung Awareness Month in Ontario. I'd like to congratulate my constituent Robert Alexander-Carew on his courage, his strength and his determination to ensure that those living with IPF get the information they need and access to all available treatments. Thank you and congratulations, Robert.

STEVENSON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize Stevenson Memorial Hospital in Alliston for having been featured recently in the Canadian Business Journal, a top Canadian publication. The journal praises the great work being done at Stevenson Memorial Hospital, noting a 100% patient satisfaction rate in the birthing unit, acknowledgement of "exemplary standing" by Accreditation Canada, and Ministry of Health recognition for high achievement when it comes to wait times in the emergency department. In fact, the article mentions that Stevenson Memorial Hospital is currently ranked second in wait times out of 74 high-volume emergency departments in all of Ontario.

This distinguished recognition by the famed business journal is acknowledgement of the hospital's tremendous commitment to the safety and well-being of the patients they serve. It also speaks to the tremendous team of physicians, nurses, staff, volunteers and board members who work tirelessly to make this all possible.

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Mr. Speaker, you may not know this, but this hospital was built nearly 50 years ago to accommodate 7,000 emergency visits per year; this year, it will exceed 30,000 visits. The hospital is literally bursting at the seams. To work within their budget and provide such high quality care and do it well is an impressive accomplishment.

As MPP for Simcoe-Grey, I'm tremendously grateful to the people at our local hospital. I look forward to moving ahead with the much-needed expansion of this health care facility.

BY-ELECTION IN TORONTO CENTRE

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm going to change it up today and actually pay tribute to friends and colleagues in Toronto Centre, which is not an NDP riding. It's still a Liberal riding.

On Monday night, I was able to be at the party for Linda McQuaig, who was an incredible candidate for the federal NDP in Toronto Centre. I was very inspired; I've been inspired by Linda's work for many, many years. Her campaign continued to focus on the issue of growing inequality in this country, which I believe is an issue that people across the country care about, and I think it should be front and centre in the minds of all politicians in this province and this country.

Speaker, it's an inspiration to me that the NDP has candidates like Linda stepping forward and working on this issue, and also that people across the city came out to help that campaign. I want to thank all the volunteers who helped out on that campaign and remind all of them that we're going to be in elections again soon, and that building a strong organization that will fight for those values is incredibly important, and to encourage people across the province to step up and get involved in politics, however you believe in it.

The message that came out of that campaign is that the status quo is not okay. Linda's message is that we have power as citizens, as people of this country, to reduce inequality, to be powerful, and that we can't just leave it up to corporations to take control of that agenda. So I thank the community across this city for stepping forward and taking that challenge seriously.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Joe Dickson: My wife, Donna, and I had the distinct pleasure of welcoming Premier Kathleen Wynne to our riding of Ajax-Pickering, to make a very major announcement at Greenwood Conservation Area, located in Ajax. Councillor Pat Brown and Councillor Colleen Jordan were also there to welcome the Premier.

Ontario is expanding its world-class trail systems as a key legacy initiative of the 2015 Pan and Parapan Am Games. Some 250 kilometres in gaps in Ontario's Trans Canada Trail will connect communities from Ottawa to Windsor and Fort Erie to Huntsville.

The province is investing more than \$3.5 million—as announced by the Premier, with Michael Chan and me—in Pan Am/Parapan Am trails to help create a continuous trail of more than 2,000 kilometres. The trail will go from Taunton Road in Ajax to Highway 7 in Pickering and also connects the city of Pickering's village museum in Greenwood.

Additionally, Pickering's village museum will expand—a cherished facility in Pickering and all of Durham, like Greenwood itself, will welcome visitors in a bigger way. In 2015, the city of Pickering forecasts \$7.25 million for the design and construction of a new visitors' building.

Everything is progressing. We will create some 26,000 jobs.

Ajax is hosting both softball and baseball.

MUNICIPAL FUNDING

Mr. John O'Toole: This Liberal government is planning to cut funding to communities across the province by significantly reducing the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund, often referred to as OMPF. Last year, the Liberal government allocated \$575 million to OMPF for communities. This year, only \$550 million is going to go to those communities. In two years' time, only \$500 million will go to local communities—a cut every single year.

The government's solution to balancing their budget is to cut funding for municipalities across Ontario. In my

riding of Durham, the township of Uxbridge had OMPF funding slashed over two years—and here's the true story of it: 10% of \$1.2 million in 2013; another 15% cut in 2014 is planned. That's \$300,000 in revenue that's being chopped from their budget. Where are they to get this funding? This will amount to a 3% increase in tax on seniors in the province of Ontario. This is a 25% drop in funding. This is just unacceptable.

My municipalities have had these cuts in services and cuts to staff. Uxbridge is a rural community, heavily populated by retirees, but Uxbridge has had to increase taxes by 3% in order to pay for municipally mandated services.

There have been further cuts by the assessment changes, such as the greenbelt and the Oak Ridges moraine, eliminating growth in revenue by taking productive land out of service.

What this government has done to the province of Ontario is simply not tell the whole story about the changes of uploading services in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I thank all members for their statements.

PETITIONS

DISTRACTED DRIVING

Mr. John Fraser: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas ‘texting while driving’ is one of the single biggest traffic safety concerns of Ontarians;

“Whereas text messaging is the cause for drivers to be 23 times more likely to be in a motor vehicle accident;

“Whereas talking on a cellphone is found to be four to five times more likely for a driver to be involved in an accident;

“Whereas Ontario is only one of few provinces in Canada where there are no demerit points assessed under the current cellphone/distracted driving legislation currently in place;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To adopt Bill 116 by MPP Balkissoon into law, which calls for each individual guilty of an offence and on conviction to be ‘liable to a fine of not less than \$300 and not more than \$700,’ in addition to a record of three demerit points for each offence.”

I'm affixing my signature to this, as I agree with it, and I'm giving it to page Michaela.

WASTE REDUCTION

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas protecting the environment should be everyone's responsibility, including manufacturing and material producing companies; and

“Whereas it is important to require producers to be financially and environmentally responsible for recycling the goods and packaging they sell in Ontario, and to divert these wastes from landfill to recycling to drive innovation, generate new jobs, and new Ontario-made products; and

“Whereas new approaches are needed that reflect ideas and recommendations from the recycling sector that are designed to improve current recycling systems, to increase recycling and diversion rates, and better protect our environment;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act, 2013, introduced on June 6, 2013, by the Ontario Minister of Environment.”

I agree with this and will send it down to the table with Jonathan.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in Durham region. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Hydro One Networks Inc. (Hydro One) is proposing construction of a new transformer station on a 100-acre site in Clarington, near the Oshawa-Clarington boundary;

“Whereas the site is on the Oak Ridges moraine/greenbelt” which is a sensitive environment;

“Whereas concerns have been raised about the environmental impacts of this development, including harm to wildlife as well as contamination of ponds, streams and the underground water supply;

“Whereas sites zoned for industrial and/or commercial use are the best locations for large electricity transformer stations;

“Whereas most, if not all, residents do not agree this project is needed and that, if proven to be necessary, it could be best accommodated at alternative locations such as Cherrywood or Wesleyville;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Ontario Legislature support the preservation of the Oak Ridges moraine, the greenbelt and the natural environment at this site. We also ask that the Ontario Legislature require the Clarington transformer station to be built at an alternative location zoned for an industrial facility and selected in accordance with the best planning principles” and full environmental approval.

I'm pleased to sign and support it and present it to Yong Da, one of the pages.

BREASTFEEDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from the women around Brantford and their families.

“Whereas Health Canada, the Canadian Paediatric Society and the World Health Organization recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life

with continued breastfeeding along with other food sources for up to two years and beyond for optimal health;
1520

"Whereas breastfeeding is normal and natural but like childbirth it can be complicated requiring specialized support for a family's success;

"Whereas lactation consultants are trained, internationally certified breastfeeding specialists who can assist women having breastfeeding problems, and be resources of breastfeeding expertise in the community;

"Whereas Brantford, until 2005 when the service was cut, had a breastfeeding clinic run by lactation consultants at Brantford General Hospital which was highly utilized;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to facilitate the reinstatement of a lactation consultant-led breastfeeding clinic in Brantford General Hospital."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Payton to bring it to the Clerk.

WASTE REDUCTION

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's great to be able to read this petition while I'm joined by Andrew Lee and Paul Anderson from the Oakville Professional Firefighters. It reads as follows:

"Whereas protecting the environment should be everyone's responsibility, including manufacturing and material producing companies; and

"Whereas it is important to require producers to be financially and environmentally responsible for recycling the goods and packaging they sell in Ontario, and to divert these wastes from landfill to recycling to drive innovation, generate new jobs, and new Ontario-made products; and

"Whereas new approaches are needed that reflect ideas and recommendations from the recycling sector that are designed to improve current recycling systems, to increase recycling and diversion rates, and better protect our environment;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act, 2013, introduced on June 6, 2013, by the Ontario Minister of Environment."

I agree with this, obviously, will sign it and send it down with Spencer.

DARLINGTON NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to present another petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"Whereas approximately 20% of Ontario's electricity is produced at the Darlington generating station;

"Whereas it was Premier Wynne who cancelled the new build at Darlington, costing Ontario 20,000 direct and indirect jobs associated with the new build;

"Whereas this severely limits employment opportunities for university graduates from the University of Ontario Institute of Technology" and other universities in Ontario. Where are they to gain experience in Durham now?

"Whereas in addition to refurbishing the four existing reactors at Darlington the building of new capacity is important for the future of Ontario's manufacturing sector and for jobs and investment in our Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Ontario's elected MPPs and the provincial government reaffirm their commitment to the complete refurbishment of all four units at the Darlington generating station and that the Ontario government reinstate the original plan for the completion of the two new reactors at the Darlington generating station."

I'm pleased to sign and support this and present it to Michaela, one of the pages here at Queen's Park.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: It's a pleasure for me to present this petition from the people of the northeast, and it goes as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government" has made PET scanning "a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients...; and

"Whereas, since October 2009, insured PET scans are performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with Health Sciences North, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through Health Sciences North, thereby serving and providing equitable access" to the people of the northeast.

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Ana to bring it to the table.

DISTRACTED DRIVING

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 'texting while driving' is one of the single biggest traffic safety concerns of Ontarians;

"Whereas text messaging is the cause for drivers to be 23 times more likely to be in a motor vehicle accident;

"Whereas talking on a cellphone is found to be four to five times more likely for a driver to be involved in an accident;

"Whereas Ontario is only one of few provinces in Canada where there are no demerit points assessed under the current cellphone/distracted driving legislation currently in place;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To adopt Bill 116 by MPP Balkissoon into law, which calls for each individual guilty of an offence and on conviction to be 'liable to a fine of not less than \$300 and not more than \$700,' in addition to a record of three demerit points for each offence."

I will sign this petition and give it to page Jeffrey.

HOSPITAL PARKING FEES

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm certainly having an advantage today to speak up for my constituents.

"Whereas the United Senior Citizens of Ontario has expressed its concerns over the high costs of parking at hospitals in Ontario on behalf of its more than 300,000 members; and

"Whereas thousands of Ontario seniors find it difficult to live on their fixed income and cannot afford" not just the electricity but "these extra hospital parking fees added to their daily living costs; and

"Whereas the Canadian Medical Association Journal has said in an editorial that parking fees are a barrier to health care and add additional stress to patients who have enough to deal with;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Ontario's members of provincial Parliament, and the provincial government" of Kathleen Wynne, "take action to abolish parking fees for all seniors when visiting hospitals."

I am pleased to sign and support this on behalf of the seniors in the province of Ontario.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Michael Mantha: I present this petition on behalf of the good people of Marathon.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas northern Ontario will suffer a huge loss of service as a result of government cuts to ServiceOntario counters;

"Whereas these cuts will have a negative impact on local businesses and local economies;

"Whereas northerners will now face challenges in accessing their birth certificates, health cards and licences;

"Whereas northern Ontario should not unfairly bear the brunt of decisions to slash operating budgets;

"Whereas regardless of address, all Ontarians should be treated equally by their government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Review the decision to cut access to ServiceOntario for northerners, and provide northern Ontarians equal access to these services."

I agree with this petition and present it to page Spencer to bring down to the Clerks.

DISTRACTED DRIVING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas 'texting while driving' is one of the single biggest traffic safety concerns of Ontarians;

"Whereas text messaging is the cause for drivers to be 23 times more likely to be in a motor vehicle accident;

"Whereas talking on a cellphone is found to be four to five times more likely for a driver to be involved in an accident;

"Whereas Ontario is only one of few provinces in Canada where there are no demerit points assessed under the current cellphone/distracted driving legislation currently in place;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To adopt Bill 116 by MPP Balkissoon into law, which calls for each individual guilty of an offence and on conviction to be 'liable to a fine of not less than \$300 and not more than \$700,' in addition to a record of three demerit points for each offence."

I am pleased to sign this petition and to send it down with page Cynthia.

CHILD PROTECTION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario is one of the few provinces that does not have independent oversight of child welfare administration; and

"Whereas eight provinces now have independent oversight of child welfare issues, including child protection; and

"Whereas all provincial ombudsmen first identified child protection as a priority issue in 1986, and still Ontario does not allow the Ombudsman to investigate people's complaints about children's aid societies' (CAS) decisions; and

"Whereas people wronged by CAS decisions concerning placement, access, custody or care are not allowed to appeal those decisions to the Ontario Ombudsman's office;"

They petition the Legislative Assembly "to enact legislation in support of the Ombudsman of Ontario to have the power to probe decisions and investigate complaints concerning the province's children's aid societies (CAS)."

I will affix my name to this, Mr. Speaker, and ask page Ana to bring it to the Clerk.

1530

HOME CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that also comes from all over, and it goes as follows:

“Whereas many Ontarians need health care services at home and 6,100 people are currently on wait-lists for care;

“Whereas waiting for over 200 days for home care is unacceptable;

“Whereas eliminating the wait-lists won’t require any new funding if the government caps hospital CEO salaries, finds administrative efficiencies in the local health integration networks (LHINs) and community care access centres (CCACs), standardizes procurement policies and streamlines administration costs;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly” of Ontario “as follows:

“That a five-day home care guarantee is established and existing wait-lists eliminated so that Ontarians receive the care they need within a reasonable time frame.”

I support this petition, will affix my name to it, and page—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

M^{me} France Gélinas:—will bring it to the Clerk.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The time for petitions is over.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Before I start, I’d like to introduce the Speaker’s gallery full of the Hawkins Gignac family, who are here this afternoon to be part of this auspicious occasion. I just want to say that they’ve been waiting a long time for this opportunity to be here for third reading of Bill 77.

Today, I rise to speak to Bill 77, the Hawkins Gignac Act, hopefully for the last time. This bill—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Excuse me. Mr. Hardeman, you have to move the bill first. You didn’t do that.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I didn’t think I had to do—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You missed a level.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I didn’t think I had to do that. I’ve done that a number of times before.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You have to do it every time, I’m afraid.

HAWKINS GIGNAC ACT (CARBON MONOXIDE SAFETY), 2013

LOI HAWKINS GIGNAC DE 2013 (PROTECTION CONTRE LE MONOXYDE DE CARBONE)

Mr. Hardeman moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 77, An Act to proclaim Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week and to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997 to provide safety requirements

related to the presence of unsafe levels of carbon monoxide on premises / *Projet de loi 77, Loi proclamant la Semaine de la sensibilisation au monoxyde de carbone et modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la prévention et la protection contre l’incendie pour prévoir des exigences en matière de protection contre la présence, dans des lieux, de niveaux dangereux de monoxyde de carbone.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Mr. Hardeman has moved Bill 77, third reading.

Mr. Hardeman.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today, I rise to speak to Bill 77, the Hawkins Gignac Act, again, hopefully for the last time.

This bill will make carbon monoxide detectors mandatory in all Ontario homes. Carbon monoxide is known as the silent killer because it is a colourless, odorless and tasteless gas that can only be detected by a functioning carbon monoxide alarm.

As many of you know, getting this bill here today has not been an easy road. I have introduced it five times before. Each time, the bill was blocked and I had to make a decision: Am I going to introduce this bill again? Am I going to use my private member’s slot to debate this same bill?

Each time I considered those questions, I thought of the reasons why we had put this bill forward in the first place, such as the dedication of the many supporters that are here today. For five years, many of these supporters have written to committees, come to Queen’s Park for hearings and meetings, extended support to my office and raised awareness across the province about the dangers of carbon monoxide.

I want to take a moment to thank some of these people for their perseverance on this issue. They are the people who truly deserve the congratulations.

They include the Insurance Bureau of Canada and their representatives who I have toured parts of the province with to raise awareness and donate detectors to local fire departments. I want to thank both Doug DeRabbie and Matt Hiraishi, who are here with us today in the gallery.

I also want to recognize Carol Heller from Kidde Canada, who has been very helpful in raising awareness and distributing detectors across the province.

The Hawkins Gignac Foundation for CO Education has also been very supportive of this process. They are represented here today by Pat Folliott and others.

Another group that has shown support both in person here today and throughout the five-year process is the Ontario firefighters’ association, who are represented today by president Mark McKinnon. I introduced them this morning, Mr. Speaker, and they have been very supportive. They represent over 11,000 professional full-time firefighters who have been very active in supporting this bill from day one, and I want to say thank you to them.

The Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs has also been a great partner, represented today by president Matt Pegg. They were helpful in amending previous versions of the

bill to ensure that enforcement of this law would be guaranteed. They recommended that our bill amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act instead of the building code. Thank you very much for your support.

Also, Trevor Ford, a firefighter from the city of Woodstock in my riding, is here to lend support. I want to thank Trevor for his support all the way through.

Over the last five years, I have received support from more groups and people than I could name today. That being said, there is one person in particular who has been a force behind this bill. That man is John Gignac, the uncle of Laurie Hawkins, who has been instrumental in pushing this legislation forward. John created the Hawkins Gignac Foundation for CO Education to raise awareness of the dangers of carbon monoxide to help save lives, not only in Ontario but across the country. John experienced the heartbreak every time unanimous consent was denied or that prorogation killed the bill. However, John persevered and is truly an inspiration and one of the reasons that I have continued through this long process. I want to thank you, John, for everything you've done. I look forward to personally congratulating you a little later, maybe over a glass of wine. Thank you, John.

John's brother Ben is also here, joined by his wife, Donna Gignac. They are the parents of Laurie Hawkins. I want to thank them for their support throughout this difficult process. In addition, Richard Hawkins's mother, Debbie, is here, and his brother Tom. They are joined by several other members of the Hawkins family, and I want to thank them all for coming, even though it must be tough for them to show their support.

Laurie and her husband, Richard, and their two children, Cassandra and Jordan, tragically perished in December 2008 in their Woodstock home from carbon monoxide poisoning. The carbon monoxide accumulated because of a blocked vent in the gas fireplace. A carbon monoxide detector may have prevented this tragedy. That is why we are here today.

Shortly after this tragedy almost five years ago, I introduced the Hawkins Gignac Act the first time. The reason was simple: to make carbon monoxide detectors mandatory so that tragedies like this would hopefully never happen again. Yet despite this common sense idea, the process has taken five years. In those five years, I have introduced the bill five different times. Every single time the bill received unanimous support at every step. It went through, but due to prorogation, it was blocked from being law each time, except today.

This bill, in all of its five forms, has never received a single vote or a single speech in opposition to its objectives, and that is a telling fact. It means that there is an institutional problem in our Legislature, when a bill that is not opposed by anyone in this chamber has taken five years to pass. I'm glad to see it finally get to this point, but I strongly urge the members to consider the process that this private member's bill has gone through.

Despite the wait, there has been some positive to it, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy that we have been raising awareness of the issue for five years, and many people,

including hundreds in my riding of Oxford, have taken necessary steps to protect themselves and their families.

Earlier this month, I went to Trenton with the member from Northumberland—Quinte West, donating carbon monoxide detectors to the local fire department. There, the fire chief, John Whelan, told me about a couple who had perished from carbon monoxide poisoning. They had a gas-fired generator in their semi-detached garage that they rarely used. One day, they decide to test the generator to make sure it still worked; unfortunately, it did and caused carbon monoxide to accumulate in their home. They did not have a working carbon monoxide detector.

On the other hand, I recently heard at committee from Jim Jessop, the deputy fire chief from the city of London. He told me about a couple, Tom and Linda Moore, who had a very similar experience. The Moores' neighbours were having their ducts cleaned. The duct cleaning service left a truck running to power the generators in a shared driveway, and the exhaust fumes blew right into the air intake of the Moores' home. The carbon monoxide alarm went off, and the Moores evacuated and called 911. Tom later said, "I probably would have been dead if it weren't for the alarms."

It is these types of stories that point out why carbon monoxide detectors are needed in every home in Ontario. A carbon monoxide detector helped save the Moore family.

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CO poisoning can stem from a number of different sources, both inside and outside the home. Everyone is at risk. The Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs has written that "88% of all homes have something that poses a carbon monoxide threat." There are still many Ontario families that need to be protected from the dangers of carbon monoxide.

Some municipalities have realized this need and taken steps to protect their citizens. They've done this by passing municipal bylaws requiring carbon monoxide detectors in all homes. These municipalities include my own hometown, South-West Oxford, and Ingersoll, in my riding. North Bay has also taken these steps through the mayor at the time, who is now my seatmate, the member from Nipissing.

While I appreciate the work that these municipalities have done to protect their families, it does not replace provincial law. Every family in Ontario deserves the same protection from carbon monoxide poisoning. In fact, there are many homes in the northern parts of our province that don't belong to any individual municipality. They deserve protection from carbon monoxide poisoning as well.

The need for these detectors reminds me of the story of a local Girl Guide troop in my riding, from Ingersoll. While on a camping trip, the Girl Guides, led by troop leader Amy Boddy, made sure to test the carbon monoxide detectors in their cabin. Just the next morning, the alarm sounded. The stove had a blockage and filled the cabin with carbon monoxide. The girls evacuated and

called the authorities. The fire department registered carbon monoxide readings at levels well above fatal.

Amey Boddy wrote to me about the need for detectors and told me clearly that she believes they would not have survived the weekend without the detectors. That group of Girl Guides was here in the Legislature when we read this bill for the second time for the last time. However, having a detector is only part of the solution. It is critical that appliances are inspected for potential blockage, and that the CO detectors are regularly tested and replaced.

This bill becoming law does not mean that all Ontarians will know about the dangers of carbon monoxide. To raise awareness, now and in the future, we have amended the bill to create Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week. This week would take place beginning November 1 each year and coincide with the end of daylight saving time.

Many fire departments already promote the changing of the time and inspecting smoke alarms together. We need to continue this promotion and increase the awareness of both the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning and the need for functioning detectors. With the combination of Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week and this law making carbon monoxide detectors mandatory, I hope the lives of many Ontarians will be saved.

Over the past five years, I've heard many tragic stories about people perishing from carbon monoxide poisoning because they did not have a working detector, but in those same five years I've heard many more stories of people being saved by carbon monoxide detectors. I know that the work that John Gignac, the Insurance Bureau of Canada and fire departments across the province are doing is paying off.

Applause.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Exactly. Give them a round of applause.

I've heard stories about a man who went out and bought a detector, only to have it go off and alert him to a high level of carbon monoxide before he even took it off his kitchen counter. From the Moore family to the Ingersoll Girl Guides, people are being saved every day because of the awareness raised around carbon monoxide detectors.

I've met with fire departments across the province, like the one in Stratford, which has created a loaner program for CO detectors. When they respond to a call, be it for a smoke alarm or a dead battery in the carbon monoxide detector, they bring along a new CO detector. The department loans the homeowner a detector so they can be protected until the family has a chance to buy a new alarm.

It's initiatives like this that need to be complimented. These programs are created to fill a void. To this point, we have not been doing everything we can to protect Ontarians from that silent killer, but today, with this bill, we can be proud that we are doing something worthwhile to help the people of this province.

It's been a long journey, a journey filled with many disappointments, but today, we as legislators—and, more

importantly, as Ontarians—have the ability to do the right thing. Today we have the opportunity to make five years of hard work pay off and be worth it. The Yukon has already passed similar legislation, and we may have lost the opportunity to be the first province or territory, but I'll paraphrase John Gignac himself when he told me, "This is the first time in my life that I don't mind finishing second."

For the final time in this process I ask for your support, and I speak to the members of the Legislature, for Bill 77, the Hawkins Gignac Act. Today, we can take a great step to honour the Hawkins Gignac family and know that some good came from this tragedy.

Please join me in honouring the memory of Laurie, Richard, Cassandra and Jordan, by protecting all Ontario families. Thank you very much.

Applause.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to stand up and speak in support of this important piece of legislation. I would like to commend the member from Oxford for his tenacity and his resilience. He is clearly someone who is very passionate about creating safer conditions in our home. I would also like to say that I also share in his frustration over the time that it has taken for this day to come.

This act actually began on December 11, 2008. Bill 77 was then first introduced as Bill 143. It has been private member's Bill 69. It has been Bill 20 on December 6, 2011. In February 2013, it was Bill 18. It is now Bill 77, the Hawkins Gignac Act (Carbon Monoxide Safety).

It has taken a great deal of energy and a great deal of effort to bring this legislation to this place in this House. I too would like to thank those who have not only assisted the member from Oxford and encouraged him but have done some of the hard work on the front lines on the ground to ensure that this act will truly address the core issues that we see around carbon monoxide detectors.

The Insurance Bureau of Canada came to our committee, and they were very clear that they're very supportive of this. They have joined forces in ensuring that there's an education campaign associated with this act. It is very clear from the fire chiefs of Ontario, and I think it's very powerful that today the Fire Fighters Association of Ontario is also here. They are in the front lines and go into homes where 911 calls have been made. Those are dangerous situations. Quite honestly, they are also those first responders when carbon monoxide detectors have not been in the home. They welcome this legislation as well.

I think one of the most frustrating things about how long it has taken is that deaths through carbon monoxide are preventable deaths. With education and with resources, we can ensure that the pain and grief that the Hawkins family experienced is not felt by other families across this province.

I would like to commend John Gignac, his family and his friends who are here today for turning their grief and

their sorrow into something positive, a positive action that will save lives. I think that is a very meaningful way to honour the lives of his family.

I was going to cite the same story that the member from Oxford has, because there's a clear record through the media and through education that we know that carbon monoxide detectors do save lives. We know that these are preventable deaths, and we know that through his resilience and through the resilience of the family, this act can pass today with all of our support. The act actually was made stronger, I believe, by also incorporating the Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week. This is a great opportunity to partner with the smoke detectors and public health. They're definitely on the record as being very supportive.

1550

The fact that this has come here today, when we also have real estate agents and firefighters in the House, I think, is very meaningful.

As I said, I'd like to commend the member for his resiliency. Of course the NDP will be supporting this. It should not have taken five years, but let's get it done today, and let's ensure that families are stronger. I know John has said that once this law passes in Ontario, he'll move on to Canada because this actually should be a national campaign as well.

My thoughts are with the family and friends who are here today. The NDP is fully supportive of this piece of legislation.

Interruption.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Just a friendly reminder to our guests: You can't clap or make any noises. Unfortunately, you have to be good and be quiet. That's the rules around here, I'm sorry to inform you.

Further debate?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I want to start by thanking the member from Oxford, MPP Hardeman, for his advocacy and dedication on this issue.

I would like to welcome the Hawkins and Gignac families to the House today. I just cannot imagine how we would feel if we arrived and found three or four of our siblings dead from carbon monoxide. I cannot imagine how you felt.

We support this bill. This is a step that needs to be taken, and I appreciate the initiative that the member for Oxford has taken. My ministry has worked with the member to craft this version of the bill to improve its chances of success.

This bill will build on the other work my ministry has done. We have strengthened the Ontario fire code so that smoke alarms are required on every storey of a home. We amended the Ontario building code in 2010, requiring all new residential buildings higher than three storeys to install sprinklers. We are proud to become the first province in Canada to make the installation of automatic sprinklers mandatory in existing residences for seniors, people with disabilities and vulnerable citizens.

We have made a lot of progress by working together, but more needs to be done. We know that carbon monox-

ide is the number one cause of accidental poisoning in North America. Between 2008 and 2012, an average of 12 Ontarians died from carbon monoxide poisoning each year. These deaths are preventable. Currently, CO detectors are required only in new, expanded or renovated residential construction if there is an attached garage or if there are fuel-burning appliances.

Bon nombre de familles ontariennes n'ont pas de détecteur chez elles et pourraient être empoisonnées par le monoxyde de carbone.

We ask Ontarians to do their part to protect their families. But our goal as government is to ensure all homes are adequately protected.

Since 2011, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has mandated the installation of CO detectors in new construction through the Ontario building code. Many Ontario municipalities have introduced bylaws that mandate CO detectors in residential buildings. We would like to see CO detectors become mandatory and uniform across the province. That's why we support the member from Oxford's bill.

If passed, the bill will allow the ministry to regulate the use of CO detectors and give local fire departments additional enforcement powers. This will make Ontario families and our communities safer. It will save lives.

If this bill passes, the Office of the Fire Marshal will conduct technical consultations as soon as possible. We will make sure that the technical advisory committee expedites this process. We want to see this done quickly and correctly, just as the member for Oxford does.

In closing, I would like to thank all the firefighters across Ontario, who, on a daily basis, are putting their own lives at risk to save other people's lives. In this bill that we're talking about, they will do it through education and inspection.

I want to thank the family for being here. I know it's not an easy moment, but as you can see, all three parties are in agreement to pass this bill.

Again, I want to thank the member from Oxford.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I am proud to stand once again in this Legislature to speak to the third and final reading of Bill 77, the Hawkins Gignac Act.

I want to begin by congratulating my seatmate, the member from Oxford, and the members of Laurie and Richard's family, many of whom are here in attendance today. They should all be commended for their dogged determination in ensuring that a tragedy like the one that befell their family never, ever, ever happens in Ontario again.

Speaker, I have to just acknowledge the rollercoaster ride that the person we affectionately, in this place, call Uncle Ernie has been on for five years. We're all very, very proud of you, Ernie, for pushing for this.

We can only imagine the rollercoaster ride that the family has been on, as well, over these several years.

The deaths of Laurie and Richard and their children hit very close to home in Nipissing, as they were former residents of North Bay.

I'd like to take the time to recognize members of the family who are here today from North Bay: Tom Hawkins and Pam Hawkins and their lovely daughters Kayla Hawkins and Kendra Hawkins, and North Bay firefighter Derek Gignac. Thank you for being here today. I hope I'm not leaving any of the North Bay people out.

As mayor of the city of North Bay at the time of the family's tragedy—our community was determined to do something to ensure that we never saw anything like that happen to another family in our community. In March 2009, North Bay city council enacted a bylaw making it mandatory for every home with a fuel-fired appliance to have a working carbon monoxide detector.

The awareness raised through the Hawkins Gignac Act in my community has saved lives and will continue to save lives; its passage will do likewise for all Ontarians.

The frightening thing about carbon monoxide poisoning is the number of close calls that we do not hear about. Let me give you an example. Just last January, the North Bay fire department received 17 carbon monoxide alarm calls—17 in one month—and of those, four had confirmed levels of carbon monoxide in the home. Fortunately, four potential tragedies were averted.

Just this past Friday, in Norfolk county, two people were sent to hospital, as a precaution, after their home became contaminated with carbon monoxide. According to the Simcoe Reformer, the occupants of a house on old Highway 24, near Waterford, hadn't been feeling well, and when firefighters arrived, they found high carbon monoxide readings. Luckily, this did not end in tragedy. But, as we're all aware, not everyone is that lucky. In September of this year, an 84-year-old man from Burk's Falls died and his wife was left critically ill from CO poisoning. I'm sure if members of this Legislature checked with their local fire departments, they too would get a better sense of how frequently these close calls really do come about.

1600

I have previously relayed the story of Colleen Point, a high school teacher in North Bay. Last year she, her husband and her young daughter started to feel nauseous and tingling, but only when their CO alarm finally did go off did the family of five get dressed and leave their home. Thankfully, they took their alarm seriously, and their lives, thanks to you, were saved.

CO detectors do save lives. It's as simple as that. I can't understand why anyone would object to having a device in your home that can save a life. How can anyone not afford to have one in the home, law or no law, especially in a day like today when you can easily get a smoke detector and CO alarm combined in one device? Why require one and not the other?

As winter approaches, I would again take this opportunity to remind people, especially northern and rural Ontario residents, to please periodically check the exterior vents of your home to make certain they're clear of snow and ice. This is one of the biggest dangers we face

in the north when it comes to possible carbon monoxide poisonings, and the importance of this cannot be stressed enough.

In closing, I again congratulate members of this House for supporting the Hawkins Gignac Act, and I'm so pleased to be able to vote today to see this become a law in Ontario. I congratulate all of you family members who, despite setback after setback, didn't give up and saw this through. Today is your day. Passing this legislation means we, as legislators, will literally save lives. Speaker, it's not every day we in the House can say that. Please join us in supporting our member from Oxford and the Hawkins and Gignac family today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Mr. Michael Prue: Before I actually speak, I would seek unanimous consent to allow the people here to cheer. They have a great deal to cheer about, and I'm seeking unanimous consent to allow them to clap because they have every reason to clap.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Okay. It will be my decision that for once the gallery will be allowed to clap.

Applause.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As always, you make very sage and wise decisions.

Mr. John Yakabuski: He just gets a little bit of help from you, Michael.

Mr. Michael Prue: Perhaps.

I'd like to start off by thanking the member from Oxford. I know a number of people have already done that, but I want to talk about the times that he has been here in this Legislature, the times that he has raised this issue. I know myself, each and every time he raised the issue, it fell upon me to speak to it. I have spoken to this issue before and I am privileged today to be speaking to it at third reading, a thing that I had feared might never happen. But here we are, in the process of third reading, having gone through committee, having made the necessary amendments, having discussed it in its fullness and totality. Today I can see that magic time in about an hour when we're going to vote on this, and I have every confidence we're going to see it done through.

To the member of Oxford, Uncle Ernie, as we call him in this party too, for good reason, has finally delivered—five years and a very, very long process.

I am thankful as well to all the members of the House for allowing this to proceed. I have to state, and this might not be the politically correct time to say it, but this I have to state: I am thankful that we have a minority government. I am thankful because this is the kind of deal that is made between the parties and amongst the parties that allows private members' bills to proceed. They don't proceed in majority situations, except perhaps if you're a member on the government side. I have seen some of the very best ideas in this Legislature—the very best ideas—come from private members' business. We don't always see them come to fruition, but today I see something coming to fruition that needed to happen a long time ago.

I thank the members of the government party, the members of the Conservative Party especially, and perhaps some from the NDP, too. This was part of a programming motion that some were not particularly satisfied with or didn't like. But this was a programming motion that allowed certain bills to come forward that might not have seen the light of day in order that some government bills could pass. People on all sides of this House need to take a bow because this is the way this place should work.

I want to say, when I hear debates in here and banter going back and forth about "You're not doing anything; you're not getting any results. You're collaborating with the government," and all of those things—I hear those constantly. But unless this kind of process takes place, we're not going to have bills like the member from Oxford is presenting today. He stuck it through. His party agreed, although sometimes they don't agree in the House about allowing things, but they agreed here and it was an excellent thing to happen. I'm sure even the bills that they had to vote for from the government deserved to happen, too. We need to respect each other and the decisions that we are making here and talking about here because good ideas come from everywhere, and this is a beauty.

This is an opportunity to pass a bill that will enhance public safety and that will save lives. There is no reason that it should not have been the law before, but I'm hopeful that we get very speedy passage from the Lieutenant Governor, that he signs it into law and that this can be in place hopefully as early as the new year, because it needs to be in place because of, of course, the country we live in. Let's not forget the country that we live in.

This is a very cold place. It is one of the coldest places on earth where a lot of people live, this beautiful place of Ontario and of Canada. The winters can go down to 30, 40, or 50 below, depending on what part of Ontario you are in, and we all need to heat our properties. One of the most common ways of heating the properties is through combustible machines: oil, gas, fire generators, all those things that produce carbon monoxide. Because we live here, the presence of carbon monoxide is probably a great deal higher than in other climates.

We also live in an enormous country and in an enormous province, where you have to travel long distances, and we rely on the internal combustion automobile and other things that also produce carbon monoxide. So we have an obligation to understand the sources of carbon monoxide pollution and to remedy them. That's what this bill is going to do.

It was a particularly poignant moment for me not only when the member from Oxford lost his composure here, but also when the relatives of the Hawkins Gignac family came to the committee and testified. They testified about not even understanding what carbon monoxide was and not understanding the full ramifications until it actually happened to their family. I believe the man's name was John Gignac who came in. He was a firefighter, and when I heard he was a firefighter and even he at that

point did not understand the full ramifications, although he does now, then we need a lot of things to be done in terms of education. I'm proud that this bill is going to do exactly that.

I am proud that the Insurance Bureau of Canada came before us and talked about this because insurance insures mostly property. This is a silent killer that doesn't harm one stick of furniture inside of a property, but the Insurance Bureau of Canada, in their wisdom, and rightly so, recognized the benefits of this particular act.

I'm proud of the firefighters who came forward and talked about this act, because they all too often are called to witness the carnage of carbon monoxide. It may not be blood splattered all over and those kinds of things; it's just simply people dead, and to see the waste of human life must be horrific to them.

I'm proud of the people of this province, and I'm proud that they too have supported the member from Oxford throughout all of these many long years.

1610

I am proud that the committee saw, in its wisdom, to pass some amendments. The first one—I admit, I was wondering why the first week of November was chosen, because it would fall on different days of the year, but, as the member from Oxford so correctly pointed out, you've only got a tiny window between Halloween and Remembrance Day. You had to choose some time, and this is the time when the clocks fall back, when people are expected to change the batteries on their equipment in the household, particularly carbon monoxide and fire detectors. It is a perfect time to remember this.

I am proud that we put a preface into the bill, because it did not have a preface that talked about the travails of the Hawkins Gignac family, so anyone reading the bill in the future will know the genesis of how this came to be and will understand the pivotal role that that family played in the passage of the bill.

I'd like to conclude by thanking the firefighters who go out every day into circumstances like this, and for supporting the bill and coming to committee. I would like to thank my fellow legislators, all of them who had a part in making sure that this happened, through the legislative process, through the bargaining back and forth to get the committee to hear this bill on the order paper, for the Conservative Party to insist that this was part of the programming motion, because there were other bills that you had that you could have done instead or as well as, but you chose this one, and rightly so.

I would like to thank the people of Ontario, who I think support this bill, who need some education around the bill, but who will understand for years and generations to come what was done here today. Thank you to all of you, and thank you to the member from Oxford.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Before I continue with further debate, I'd like to thank the member from Beaches–East York for helping me bend the rules.

Further debate?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I rise today with great pleasure to support Bill 77, the Hawkins Gignac Act (Carbon

Monoxide Safety), being put forward by the member from Oxford. He is to be applauded for his tenacity on this subject, as there is little doubt that, should it be passed, this legislation would save lives.

I spoke in support of this bill this past spring and again just 27 days ago, and I'm pleased to have the opportunity to do it again—this time, hopefully, for the last time, for its third reading debate. The question before us today is, how much value do we put on the lives of Ontarians and of our families? I believe we, as legislators, have the moral responsibility to take a leadership role to protect Ontarians from tragedies that can be prevented, tragedies like the one that took the lives of Laurie Hawkins, her husband, Richard, and their children, Cassie and Jordan, in December of 2008. I know that's why this bill is here; it comes from a place of caring—caring from the community of Oxford and caring from communities across the province, whether they be in Sudbury, in Kingston or in Niagara Falls.

I know that the process of getting this bill to third reading has seemed like a very long journey for the member from Oxford, and I understand that. Getting a private member's bill to become law feels like a Herculean feat at times. It's one that forms the backbone of our democracy.

When I first came to Queen's Park, back in 2003, I remember some advice that I was given by former Premier McGuinty about private members' bills. I was trying to struggle with what I could bring to the table that could make a difference. He told us to be courageous and he told us to bring forward legislation that was meaningful.

For those of you who have been in this place long enough to remember when I first arrived back in 2003, I brought forward three private members' bills to raise awareness with regard to fire safety. Through my efforts on this issue, I became familiar with the hazards that we face every day when firefighters are entering our homes, whether it be from the colourless carbon monoxide gas or the smoke that comes from a fire.

That's why I'm proud that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has developed tough building code and fire code standards to protect Ontarians. In fact, recognizing that carbon monoxide poisoning has become the number one cause of accidental poisoning in North America, the building code was amended back in 2001 to require carbon monoxide detectors in all residential suites where there's a source of carbon monoxide, such as a gas furnace or a gas appliance. Because this requirement covers both houses and multiple-unit residential buildings, more Ontarians are protected, whether they are homeowners or tenants who are renting.

Today we have many of our firefighters visiting us from across Ontario. They're in our Legislature, lobbying us on a number of issues, particularly about safety. I think that's the overwhelming issue that they bring to our Legislature on their lobby days. For years now, the Ontario fire service has been championing public safety. They've asked that all residents be protected by carbon

monoxide alarms. Many fire departments have enacted local bylaws that prescribe CO alarms in all residential buildings in which occupants are at risk of exposure to the poisonous CO gas.

Though I acknowledge that a community approach is not the ideal way to address this issue, even these moves have saved lives. Across Ontario, a number of municipalities, such as Oshawa, Toronto or my own community of Brampton, have passed bylaws, based on advice from their fire professionals, requiring carbon monoxide detectors in their dwellings. They're able to do this often by using the authority to pass property standard bylaws, which are set out in the Building Code Act. In fact, in my own home municipality of Brampton, many residents have benefited from the protection of a CO alarm since 1998, when the fire department saw the need for these alarms and took action to have council pass a bylaw to protect our residents.

There is still more work to be done, and our government is working to continue to ensure that Ontarians, no matter what their age, are protected. That's why I was honoured to stand alongside the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services and the minister responsible for seniors, in May, when we announced that our government was moving ahead to make automatic sprinklers mandatory in residences for seniors, people with disabilities and other vulnerable citizens of Ontario. That announcement, much like this bill, has built on our government's work to protect the residents of this province.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, I'm proud that our government has decided to move forward on this important life safety initiative, and I'm glad to have been at the table to see these important changes take place, because we all understand the need to avoid tragedies, like that terrible tragedy that happened in 2008 that took the lives of an OPP officer and her family in Oxford. I want to see carbon monoxide detectors in every home in Ontario. I want to see those detectors in those locations because it will save lives.

A wise man once said that the best time to plant a tree was 25 years ago; the second-best time is today. The best time to ensure that all homes had carbon monoxide detectors was the day before that terrible, fateful day in December when Laurie and her family lost their lives. The second-best time is today to ensure every home has a carbon monoxide detector.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to support the member from Oxford. I appreciate his passion on this issue. I'm happy to support him. I know he's doing it for the right reasons and I'm happy to support the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It is indeed my pleasure to speak in support of Bill 77 and the member from Oxford with regard to the Hawkins Gignac Act regarding carbon monoxide safety. This is important legislation, because it is guaranteed to save lives in Ontario.

When you look at the numbers, it is clear that this is way overdue. The Toronto Fire Services estimated that

they receive approximately 4,000 carbon-monoxide-related calls annually. Hundreds of people are hospitalized annually in Ontario as a result of carbon monoxide poisoning. Polls have shown that up to 60% of homes in Canada do not have a carbon monoxide detector. Many jurisdictions across Canada and the United States legally require carbon monoxide detectors in homes and businesses, and it's about time Ontario joined them.

I must congratulate the member from Oxford, and thank him as well, for his perseverance and his heart, which we saw earlier today. The fact that he has been dedicated to this for five years is just a testament to his character.

This is a very important, sensible issue, and I'd like to take a moment to take a look at the member's journey that has led him to today. In December 2008, the Hawkins Gignac Act was introduced to this House for the first time. It made it to committee, but it died on the order paper when the House was prorogued in March 2010.

The member from Oxford tried again, and the bill was reintroduced on May 17, 2010, only to once again die on the order paper when the House was prorogued in June 2011.

The member from Oxford did not stop and, trying for a third time, introduced the legislation on December 6, 2011, only to have it stopped, once again, on the order paper for a third time when the House was prorogued in October 2012.

1620

Do you notice a pattern here, Mr. Speaker? The member from Oxford's perseverance and hard work did not die with the prorogations. He kept at it, and today, we have another shot at this, to get it right. We owe it to him, and we owe it to the families.

We must pay heed also to the caution that Mr. Hardeman shared with us just moments ago, and truer words have never been spoken. When there is a private member's issue that has support of all three parties, for goodness' sake, let's do honour by it, do the right thing and see it have respect and swift passage. We cannot let party colours interfere with doing the right thing, and I'm just so glad to be able to share this with him today.

We have also heard that stakeholders on this issue are pretty much in unanimous support of this bill. From fire chiefs to emergency services, the list goes on. But I want to talk about a very important stakeholder group that came to visit with me at Queen's Park a few weeks ago with regard to this important issue when, particularly, Bill 77 was receiving second reading.

I actually had the privilege to meet with a Girl Guide troop, the 1st Ingersoll Girl Guide troop, to be exact. They were here to support the member from Oxford and this very, very important piece of legislation. The member from Oxford shared their story, and it touched my heart. It was a "learn to do by doing" experience for the Girl Guides, but what a story they have. I congratulated them for making the effort to come to Queen's Park with their parents and with their troop leader, to raise their voice, to exercise their voice on something that was

so, so important. They were just thrilled to meet with Mr. Hardeman. They were thrilled to be here at Queen's Park.

I wish all stakeholders felt that they had the support and the open door, like the member from Oxford offered them, in order to give them a platform, if you will, to talk about what mattered. Given that they had that true life experience that could have ended in tragedy makes it even more poignant. I have to tell you that it was a powerful story, where a carbon monoxide detector saved many lives.

I have to tell you that by promptly passing the Hawkins Gignac Act, we can make carbon monoxide detectors mandatory, and we can ensure that positive stories of lives can continue to be told. This is simple, sensible legislation, and once and for all we owe it to Mr. Hardeman, the member from Oxford, and to the Hawkins Gignac family to see that this legislation has swift passage.

Just to close, I want to share the fact that Laurie's career as a first responder, as an OPP, focused on safe communities and saving lives. Laurie's legacy, together with those of her husband, Richard, and her children, Cassie and Jordan, will ensure that lives continue to be saved.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: Much has been said on this issue, and I too want to reiterate the commitment from the member from Oxford, his passion and tenacity and persistence, really, in doing the right thing. It has been said by other members that doing the right thing is the right politics.

The lesson learned here is, and the member who just spoke basically said it all, that we should learn to work respectfully with each other, especially on issues where a wide majority of the public supports this and other good initiatives. It should have a higher precedence. In fact, the way they treat private members—I don't want to make this a political statement—I'm saying, shuffled off to a Thursday afternoon where generally the discussions are ignored.

There have been important discussions even in the last several Thursdays. I participate in almost all of them. One more recently was the use of texting while driving, which is another future risk that should be dealt with now. We know the evidence is there.

I would only say that the wide support by the fire marshal's office, as well as the professional firefighters who are here today—I think kind of more by coincidence than anything else. All of the emergency service workers have really written supportive letters and comments, as well as members in the industry itself.

I think the really fitting tribute today is to the members of the Gignac family who have actually made this a reality. That's where it came from. It came from a tragic incident in 2008. We've all heard the litany of political interferences, if you will—prorogation—and why this did not become law. If you look, in the last 10 years, 250 people in Ontario have died of carbon monoxide poison-

ing. These are the lives that could have been saved, and it's the action of Mr. Hardeman and others, specifically in the Gignac family.

I'll read a comment made by John Gignac, chair of the Hawkins Gignac Foundation:

"Every loss of life is tragic. The Hawkins family carbon monoxide tragedy put the 'silent killer'—as CO is known—front and centre in the minds of families across North America. It also revitalized the discussion about legislating the installation of CO alarms in homes.

"But provinces too can choose to enact legislation. MPP Hardeman was so moved by the Hawkins story that immediately following the tragedy he drafted a private member's bill to make CO alarms mandatory across Ontario. Currently they are required only in new homes."

I support this legislation, as I believe all members do. After all of these efforts I want to congratulate Ernie working with his community and the professional firefighters in Ontario to do the right thing, which is simply the right policy. Mr. Speaker, this action will save lives, and I thank Ernie and the community for it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I am privileged to be up here speaking about this today. I'd like to say, first of all, about the member from Oxford, that there are certain people in your life that touch your heart that have admirable qualities, and that is all about my friend Mr. Hardeman. His determination and dedication, when he saw that this passage was essential, and he persevered each time when he could have gone on to another private member's bill, speaks volumes of who he is as a person that I cherish as my friend, and obviously as you would cherish as well. Thank you so much for being here today and that we have the opportunity to speak about this bill.

In memory of Laurie, Richard, Cassandra and Jordan, that they live on in memory and they will be here today in spirit—and we're grateful for all of that, so thank you.

Long-time members will know that the private member's bill from my colleague from Oxford has a fair bit of history to it. This is the fifth time this proposed legislation has come before this Legislature in the last five years, Speaker. It also has the distinction of being wiped out three times by prorogation: as 2008's Bill 143, 2010's Bill 169 and 2011's Bill 11. Bad luck, apparently, does come in threes. Fortunately, the patience and perseverance of the member from Oxford is even more abundant.

This is a worthy bill and one that is, as I have suggested, long overdue. It will certainly save lives and give peace of mind to households across the province.

Carbon monoxide is known as a silent killer, and with good reason. It is a colourless, odourless, flavourless gas, and it is poisonous. Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include headaches, nausea, dizziness, fatigue, shortness of breath and flu-like symptoms. Continuous exposure to carbon monoxide at elevated levels can cause serious health issues and death. Without an alarm, there's

an outside chance that you would be aware that something was wrong, if you were awake. If you happened to be asleep, of course, you wouldn't notice a thing. You wouldn't even wake up.

What Bill 77 proposes is an entirely reasonable response to what is a very serious and all-too-familiar threat, Speaker. Without an alarm, there is an outside chance that you would be aware that something was wrong, if you were awake. But if you were asleep, you wouldn't notice a thing.

Any number of situations can lead to elevated CO levels, and as we're waking up to colder weather, we'll run into them more often. Carbon monoxide can come from a gas-fired generator during a power outage, a space heater or hot water heater, or leaving an unvented gas stove turned on. Maybe it's the garage where your car idles as you're warming it up in the winter. We know that vehicles make up 40% of Ontario's carbon monoxide emissions.

1630

Bill 77 would amend the building code to require carbon monoxide alarms in all homes with either a fuel-burning appliance or an attached storage garage.

Whatever the cause, if you lack a carbon monoxide detector, you have no sure way of knowing when your house is filling up with poisonous gas.

With winter settling in and homes bundled tight to stay warm and keep hydro bills from running riot, the risks to homeowners are staring us right in the face. The same things that make our homes more energy-efficient can also increase the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning. I say "homes," but Bill 77 also addresses multi-residential buildings, where detectors will be required in suites with a fuel-burning appliance or those adjacent to either a garage or service room with a fuel-burning appliance.

At present, the Ontario building code only requires carbon monoxide alarms in homes built after August 6, 2001, which leaves too many families at risk.

We can do better, Speaker, and it starts with awareness, which is another common sense aspect of Bill 77.

Prevention starts with heightened public awareness, and Bill 77 will designate the first week of November every year as Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week.

Since this legislation was first brought forward five years ago, many municipalities have created bylaws to require carbon monoxide alarms to be installed and thereby protect their citizens from avoidable tragedy. They know it's the right thing to do, Speaker, and so do we.

Bill 77 deserves to become law and I am happy to support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Harris: It is truly an honour and a privilege today to rise and speak to the Hawkins Gignac Act, brought forward by my honourable colleague Ernie Hardeman, the member from Oxford.

I happened to peruse a bunch of the quotes that the member gathered over the last few years, and I couldn't help but notice the one from John Gignac, the chair of the Hawkins Gignac Foundation. He said, "Every loss of life is tragic. The Hawkins family carbon monoxide tragedy put the 'silent killer'—as CO is known—front and centre in the minds of families across North America. It also revitalized the discussion about legislating the installation of CO alarms in homes." He said the provinces, too, can choose to enact legislation. In fact, MPP Ernie Hardeman was so moved by the Hawkins' story that immediately following the tragedy, he drafted a private member's bill to make CO alarms mandatory all across Ontario. Currently, they're only required in new homes.

I can tell you folks watching at home, the families in the gallery and supporters of this bill that today is a special day, but I can assure you that as a member of the Ontario PC caucus, I know that each and every Tuesday, when we meet as a caucus, we've had many, many discussions about private members' bills that would proceed and move forward. I can tell you that the honourable member from Oxford didn't miss an opportunity to continue to keep this issue front and centre in the minds not only of his constituents, Ontarians and other provinces across Canada, but also his colleagues both on this side of the House and that side of the House—the determination of this colleague to ensure that this tragedy that rocked his community never happens again, or that we do as much as we can to prevent a tragedy like this from happening.

I've got a two-year-old at home, and I'm down here through the week, and I often think of families residing in the wintertime in Canada—as the member from the NDP so eloquently stated, we have winters in Canada. They're cold. Folks are firing up their furnaces. In fact, I had an opportunity to meet with the Professional Fire Fighters Association today, and they do see a spike in calls at this time of the year for a variety of reasons, and of course carbon monoxide is one of them, when folks want to get a bit of a head start to the day and leave their car running in their garage—even thinking of our pets, our loved ones who are extended members of our family in the homes, who could be victims of this silent killer.

I read another statement from the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs. I know a local chief in my riding of Kitchener-Conestoga, Tim Beckett, was a past president of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs:

"Many Canadians die every year from carbon monoxide poisoning in their own homes, most of them while sleeping. ...

"Hundreds of Canadians are hospitalized every year from carbon monoxide poisoning, many of whom are permanently disabled. Everyone is at risk—88% of all homes have something that poses a carbon monoxide threat.

"Carbon monoxide is a colourless, odourless, tasteless, toxic gas that enters the body through the lungs during the normal breathing process. It replaces oxygen in the

blood and prevents the flow of oxygen to the heart, brain and other vital organs."

That is why this bill will come to fruition today with the blessing of this Legislature. I know there was a constant hurdle to overcome, ensuring that this bill finally made its way to third and final reading. That day has come, and I think it was with the strong efforts, again, of my honourable colleague Ernie Hardeman, from the great riding of Oxford, who would not let this issue die.

I can assure you that there are often important issues that arise through private members' business. I know that the Minister of Municipal Affairs talked about tabling private member's bills, when she entered this House, and the advice she received from then-Premier McGuinty in terms of doing something you feel is most important. I think this is one of those bills.

As years go on, members can choose different things to table, but this member has constantly brought this issue back to the forefront. I think that not only is this the day of the family and friends and supporters who are witnessing this historical event, but a great day for private members to know that they can truly become lawmakers, stand up in this Legislature and, although they may not be a member of the government, bring forward an idea, an issue, that reflects the needs of their community and addresses the broader perspective not only of other communities but across the province as well. Knowing that other provinces always look to Ontario to lead the way, we're leading the way on this one, and we expect and hope that other jurisdictions across North America follow this important step.

I also think it's important to note another comment from Ralph Palumbo, vice-president of the Ontario Insurance Bureau of Canada: "Despite the serious threat of carbon monoxide poisoning, many Canadians do not have CO detectors in their home. We support MPP Ernie Hardeman's initiative to make CO detectors mandatory in all homes in Ontario. Imposing the installation of CO detectors is a wise investment that will help keep families safe at a minimal cost."

I leave those comments. I appreciate the endorsements that my honourable colleague received for this bill. I'm happy to stand in this Legislature today on behalf of my constituents of Kitchener-Conestoga and the broader public of Ontario to support this important initiative, and I thank the member for bringing it forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? Last call: Further debate?

Pursuant to the order of the House dated Thursday, October 3, 2013, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Hardeman has moved third reading of Bill 77, An Act to proclaim Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week and to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997 to provide safety requirements related to the presence of unsafe levels of carbon monoxide on premises.

Is it the pleasure of the House that this motion carry? Carried.

*Third reading agreed to.
Applause.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

1640

SCHOOL BOARDS COLLECTIVE
BARGAINING ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA NÉGOCIATION
COLLECTIVE DANS LES CONSEILS
SCOLAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 26, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 122, An Act respecting collective bargaining in Ontario's school system / Projet de loi 122, Loi concernant la négociation collective dans le système scolaire de l'Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): We'll start off with questions regarding Mr. Harris's comments. So questions and comments? The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was here when the member from Kitchener was speaking. I do commend him for making eminently good sense on Bill 122.

I recognize the importance of streamlining provincially the negotiation process, but really, at the end of the day, Bill 122, with all due respect, I believe it should be the kiss-and-make-up bill, or suck-up-and-make-up bill, because this really is an apology for the previous actions of this government, the Kathleen Wynne government, of bullying—in fact, I use the term “bullying”—the teachers of Ontario and the boards of Ontario and forcing the contract in Bill 13, without any negotiation with locally elected boards.

It's shameful, the transaction of overriding the authority of the school boards. I know my boards in my riding of Durham and others were very, very upset with the government. So this bill is the kiss-and-make-up bill. That's really what it is. It provides, I believe, about four tables for negotiations: the elementary; the secondary—that's OSSTF—board; OECTA, the English Catholic teachers; and the franco boards as well. But who's missing from this? Who's missing from this are the administrators in education today. The parents aren't being consulted and the students themselves aren't being consulted.

I think there's more work to be done on this bill. It's mostly a governance issue. I think the member from our caucus, the member from Kitchener-Conestoga, made eminently good sense in his 10 minutes of remarks, and I hope to have 10 minutes to speak on this later. Perhaps I'd be given as much as an hour, because this bill has a lot more history to it that needs to be put on the record.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The Minister of Consumer Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Well, thank you, and good afternoon, Speaker. On this bill, Bill 122, I just want to

acknowledge a couple of things. One is we've had 12 and a half hours of debate on this bill.

Hon. Brad Duguid: That's a lot of hours.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: It is a lot of hours. And we've had over 50 different members—or maybe some of them are repetitive; I don't know. But we've had 50 members speak to this bill. So my sense is that it's time that we pass this and get it to committee. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I was in the House when the member made his comments with regards to Bill 122, and his version of events and the version of history as to how Bill 115 played out in this House. It is really interesting, because the PC caucus has actually moved unanimous consent of adjournment of this piece of legislation, which they, in turn, then voted against; and the Liberals, who've actually just stood up and commented on the length of time that debate has occurred in this House—12 and a half hours, 50 members—they in turn voted to continue the debate and sided with the PC caucus. So we have only games here.

The games themes would continue through last September 2012, when Bill 115 was introduced and when this government imposed contracts on the education sector. It was unprecedented. We had never seen this level of heavy-handed, so-called collective bargaining in the history of the province, except—

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Mike Harris, actually, would not have gone this far.

So what we have here today in this House is the opportunity for a piece of legislation to come through; we have the opportunity for the legislation to do clear paths and clear responsibilities for school boards to be at the table, as they should—they have a legitimate role at that table—for the ministry to understand their role in bargaining, which clearly they forgot about last September, and for the respective unions in the education sector to know what their roles and responsibilities are at that table.

So this piece of legislation, despite some of the major gaps that we intend to address when it does get to committee, if the government would get it to committee—which they could do right now. Someone on that side of the House could stand up right now and send it to committee. Let's get to work, for the love of humanity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: The bill in front of us today, Bill 122, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, 2013—we're in the second reading. The first reading was just the introduction of the bill, and at second reading now, we've spent over 12 hours—12 and a half hours—on debate, and over 50 members of this Legislature have spoken to this bill. As the standing orders go, after a certain percentage of time the bill is usually sent to a committee, a standing committee of the Legislature. We want to send it there, but it seems to be continuous

that members from the opposition want to continue to speak on this bill. I think it's time to send it to committee, get a full discussion there—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): There seems to be a lot of cross chatter, and I believe heckling is not acceptable. So I don't want to hear any more.

Continue.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My point, again, is to say that there will be a full discussion at committee. We can hear witnesses come forward and we can amend the bill, change the bill. There's a full opportunity at committee to do that. That's been done on several occasions with several bills.

As I point out again here, in this Legislature, for over 12 and a half hours we have spoken about this bill. It's time to send it to committee. I'll vote in favour of sending it to committee. Let's move on with it and get it there.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Kitchener–Waterloo wasn't listening—last warning.

The member from Kitchener–Conestoga has two minutes.

Mr. Michael Harris: Thank you, Speaker, for that opportunity. I'll bring the viewers who are watching at home back to the message, or bill at hand, and that's Bill 122. I know we've heard a lot of different comments from the third party and, of course, the government.

This actually was the first opportunity that I've had to stand up on behalf of my constituents—some 100,000 people in Kitchener–Conestoga—to speak to this bill.

As I mentioned during last fall, I had several students in from the local high schools who were really concerned about the ongoings of cancelling the extracurricular activities. Unfortunately, this bill is basically formalizing the government's role in negotiations. Really, this bill is simply about setting up a negotiation process; it's not really about improving education.

We did ask the government to clear the deck previously so we could actually talk about the economy, and this is unfortunately another bill that does not do this.

One of the priorities that we've talked about in Bill 122 was amending regulation 274, and that was defining a teacher's duties to reflect what they actually do in a day—and wage restraint wasn't covered in this bill.

As I mentioned in my previous 10 minutes, we really should be ensuring that we've got the best teachers in the classroom, and when we come to hiring those teachers, it shouldn't be based on seniority. It should be based on who's best to teach. In fact, we heard about the young teacher in Toronto who was the teacher of the year but unfortunately is now unable to find employment in the classroom.

We need to ensure that our kids have the best teachers in the classroom. I know that we've got many, many of those. In fact, in our local school of J.W. Gerth—I go in there every day and I see a lot of smiles on those kids' faces, and we need to ensure that they're getting the best,

highest quality of education, but I'm not too sure if Bill 122 does this.

Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to address my last two minutes.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): A point of order. The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I move unanimous consent that the order of the House dated November 4, 2013, referring Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act, 2013, to the Standing Committee on General Government be discharged, and that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, and that the committee meet for one day of public hearings and one day of clause-by-clause as scheduled by the subcommittee of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Did the member submit one to the table so I can read it? I'll just read it.

1650

The member has asked for unanimous consent. Is it the pleasure of the House that it carries? I heard a no. Not carried.

Further debate?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It gives me pleasure to stand up in the House today to speak to Bill 122, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act. This bill would provide greater clarity around the roles of the different parties involved in collective bargaining in the education sector. I was certainly pleased to see that the role of government at the bargaining table was formalized.

I have some difficulties with this bill, and I'd like to go through them right now. My children are all through school. My three boys are out on their own, but they have children of their own, and I wonder if we should be talking not only about this bill but certainly about test scores since 2003. Despite the fact that this government spends more than \$8.5 billion on education, we have 250,000 less students in our system. This is troubling. As my grandchildren get older—they're all in public school now—this certainly worries me, because the amount of money that we're spending on education doesn't seem to be working. In fact, 91% of professors at the University of Western Ontario felt that their students who came into university were not sufficiently prepared for their university education.

Something else that I'd like to address—and I think this should be addressed when we're talking about education—is the troubling fact that principals, because of regulation 274, are not allowed to pick the best teachers for the job. It's strictly based on seniority, and that's troubling. When my sons were in public school a number of years ago, there were difficulties that we had at school, but we were always able to go to the teachers and work them out, and this was a great part of it.

In fact, with one of my children, he was moved around to other teachers that he could get along with or learn from better, because he did have a bit of a learning

disability. I worry about that in this present system, with this regulation. I have a letter in front of me here that was sent to the minister from two principals in my riding, complaining about this very thing.

I think those types of things have to be addressed sooner than later, as it will relieve some of the tension involved in our school system, especially with the management part of the schools, which certainly are our principals and vice-principals.

Something else that I'd like to say about the bill is that we have no objection to this getting to committee, where some of these things might be able to be addressed, and we're certainly willing to co-operate with the government on this, and as I said, we need to either modify or repeal regulation 274.

We want to work with the government, this is what we want to do on this bill, because education is certainly too important a subject to all of us in this House, which leads me to ask a question when we talk about co-operation. I learned just recently that the Minister of Education is coming into my riding on Friday to announce something on health. I wasn't notified. Now, if this is the type of co-operation that we can expect from this government, then how are we supposed to debate with this government and trust them?

Actually, I don't even know what the announcement is. She's the Minister of Education, but she's going to be in a hospital. I would think it's about health, but why is the Minister of Education going to announce a health thing?

Mr. John Yakubuski: They're a little bit mixed up over there.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I think so. Could it be about rural affairs? I am the critic of rural affairs. I don't know whether she knows that much about horses, so I don't know whether it's about horses.

Mr. John Yakubuski: It depends what end of the horse you're talking about, Randy.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It could be. Or could it be about the independent school bus drivers whom this government seems to love driving out of business? I don't know, but if that's the type of co-operation that this government wants to give the opposition parties in this House, I have some real issues about that.

I would hope that the Minister of Education would at least have the decency to give me a phone call. I think she knows my email address. She could tell me what's going on in the community of Mount Forest.

Interjection: I didn't hear from her when she came to my riding.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I must commend the Minister of Rural Affairs. When he comes into my riding, he tells me when he's coming, and I appreciate that. But for some reason, the Minister of Education has a problem with that.

We need to address this issue of co-operation between the parties a little bit more stringently. Mr. Speaker, I think we owe it to the people of Ontario to roll up our sleeves and talk about the kinds of laws and policies that

will enable job growth in this province. There is no plan on that side of the House for job growth. We've seen too many factories leaving this province, as we've seen with Heinz recently, as we've seen in Hamilton with the steel plant and as we've seen with other things that have happened just recently in this province—some 30,000 jobs under this Premier's watch, and that's just unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, I would move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Perth—Wellington has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1658 to 1728.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Members, take your seats, please.

Mr. Pettapiece has moved adjournment of the House.

Those in favour, please rise and remain standing. Everybody.

Those opposed, please rise.

Obviously the motion fails.

Further debate.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Wait a minute. Oh, we're going to have a count.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 0; the nays are 37.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The motion fails.

Mr. Pettapiece.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Thank you, Speaker, for your leadership on this motion. I appreciate that.

I was talking about the way that we do want this bill to get to committee, and we can amend things when we get it there. But I want to get back to what—the Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario wrote me a letter. It's all about management rights. This gets back to the amount of money we're spending on education, and yet our test scores are going down.

It says in their letter to me that they have seen an erosion of their capacity to effectively lead our schools. Teacher instructional time has been decreased by 11%, and yet there are less students in our classrooms. Time spent supervising students has decreased by 20% and class size has decreased. Now unions are telling them what can and cannot be discussed at staff meetings.

This is not right, sir. We need to get some authority back with our principals, that they can run their schools as they see fit. And for them to be told what they can and cannot discuss at staff meetings—that's ridiculous. That is just absolutely ridiculous.

I think I would like to see this government come forward with a jobs plan in conjunction with the education system. We have seen that they don't have a jobs plan. It would help address our prevailing problems we

face in our education system, and I'm sure that everybody could agree to that.

I mentioned that my grandchildren are in the public school system right now. I worry about what they are going to face when they get to be older, with what's going on with the system right now.

I think that we need to work with our management system in these schools in order to let them do what they do best, and that's teach.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I just want to recap. I appreciate some of the points that the member has brought forward, although for the majority of his 10 minutes, he was not actually speaking to the legislation that's before us.

So what just happened, for those who are watching at home, which includes my mother and my children and maybe your mom, is that the Conservatives called for unanimous consent for the adjournment of the debate on Bill 122, because we have to date, right now, in this House, over 13 hours of debate on Bill 122. Over 50 MPPs have spoken to this piece of legislation.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: That's our right.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It is your right. Then you should not call for unanimous consent for adjournment of that debate, and then not stand up and support your own motion.

And the Liberals—let's be very clear what the Liberals just did in this House. They stood up in this House, prior to this motion, and called all of us out for extending the debate on Bill 122. They said, "Bring it to committee. Vote on this legislation." And then the majority of them came into this House and voted to extend the debate on Bill 122.

So these kinds of games—this is what happens. This is what you are doing. You are contributing to the cynicism in politics by doing these games.

Bill 122 has the support of the NDP. Any one of you on that side of the House could stand up and call for this legislation to go to committee, and you know what? We would support it. You can do it right now. You could do it. You could bring peace and stability and undo the damage of Bill 115 and regulation 274. You could do it right now, but you are not doing your jobs. No, you are not. Instead, you are standing up in this House and criticizing democracy. And yet—and yet—you will go out to the education sector, and you'll say, "We care about you. We want a fair and transparent accountability around collective bargaining," and yet you are playing these games. Shame on the government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Brampton West.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: It's obvious that the opposition is stalling this bill by asking for adjournment of the House and adjournment of the debate. It's quite a ridiculous situation that we have here in the House this afternoon. What's worse is, when we do come back to vote, the opposition members don't even vote. They're making a

total mockery out of the system that we have here in the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, we don't have a lot of time left before we break for the Christmas holidays, and we have a very, very busy agenda. This bill has been debated for more than 12 hours, and over 50 people have spoken on this bill. I think it's time that we pass this bill and get it to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I would point out to my colleague from Brampton that it is within the standing orders that every member of this Legislature has the right to speak to every piece of legislation. That's how democracy works. In the PC Party, we're exercising that right. If members of the government choose not to speak to a particular bill, that's entirely up to them. If the government decides that they want to put in a closure motion on this bill, that's entirely up to them as well.

I think what needs to be pointed out, because they're talking about process and everything else here, is that we agreed to a programming motion that would clear the decks in this Legislature. Much of that legislation has gone through. And Mr. Dhillon talks about how we're going to be recessing—sorry; the member from Brampton—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): West.

Mr. John Yakabuski: —Brampton West. We're going to be recessing shortly for the winter break, the Christmas recess.

What people across the province of Ontario want to know is, and I say this to the member from Brampton West: When is your government going to bring forth a jobs plan for Ontario? Every day we hear more and more stories about job losses across the province of Ontario, where jobs are going away to the States or to Mexico or to somewhere else. What we need is some action on jobs.

But what are you bringing in? You're bringing in smoking regulations on patios. These are not things that are of paramount importance to the people of Ontario. They might be altruistic pursuits, but what people in Ontario want to know is, are you going to do something so that my family and I have an opportunity to make a living in Ontario? That's what we want to hear from the government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Brad Duguid: That's right, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for that.

I just wanted to make a couple of comments and follow-up to the member from Brampton West as well. We've talked about this, and we've said it and we're going to keep repeating it: It's now well over 50 speakers; I don't know how many we're up to now. It's got to be over 12 hours—13 hours? It's got to be 13 hours now that we've been debating this bill. I recognize every member of the House has the right to speak to this

bill, but not every member of the House has to speak to this bill.

I think everything that could possibly be said about the bill has been said. In fact, most of the members in the opposition, when they do take the opportunity to speak to it, spend maybe 30 seconds of their speaking time on the bill and the rest of the time they're talking about other things—and things that aren't even in keeping with the facts.

I mean, we in this province—the member opposite said something about jobs plans; we've never not had a job plan in this province. In fact, we've had a very aggressive job plan that's created over half a million jobs since the recession. In fact, just today I said in question period that 3,721—I think; I don't know if that's the exact number, but it's pretty close—young people are working today over the last two months since we brought in our youth jobs strategy. That's thousands of young people who are getting work experience, so when they say this stuff about job plans and things—

Mr. Vic Dhillon: They're wrong.

Hon. Brad Duguid: They're absolutely dead wrong. We've been working very hard to create jobs in this province.

Let me get back to it: It's time to move on with this bill. It's time for the opposition to stop making points over and over again. It's time for us to move this forward.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Renfrew is extremely loud.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): A point of order from the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

1740

Mr. Randy Hillier: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I just wanted to mention to the House that I think there was an error mentioned by the member from Kitchener–Waterloo. She may want to correct the record about her statements from the member from Perth–Wellington. He did not—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): With all due respect to the member, it would be up to the member from Kitchener–Waterloo if she felt she said—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Just offering my thoughtful advice.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You may sit down now. It would have been up to the member from Kitchener–Waterloo if she felt she wanted to correct the record. We don't need any help from you, thank you.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I move unanimous consent that the order of the House dated November 4, 2013, referring Bill 105—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Huron–Bruce knows you can't do that. We're in questions and answers. We can't do that.

Response, from the member from Perth–Wellington.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Thank you, Speaker. I do appreciate your indulgence in this matter. I do enjoy it when you are in the chair, and I thought I'd just put that on the record. I would also like to thank the members from Kitchener–Waterloo, Brampton West, Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities for their comments on my short talk this afternoon.

I did adjourn the House. I think we all know that. I didn't adjourn the debate. That's what the member to my left was talking about.

I would like to address a few of the thoughts that came my way with the members previous to me. Our children are getting a lot of experience in the workplace. Unfortunately, most of them are getting it out west; they're not getting it in Ontario. We need to address that. We need to have an education system that addresses that.

Our party has put those plans out in our white papers on education. You should read them. They have some really good ideas in them. Perhaps we can help our young people, because the way it's going right now, we're not helping them. Their test scores are down, which has been proven from different education authorities. Professors at the University of Western Ontario say that their students aren't prepared for university when they get there. I think that we need to do a better job as legislators on what we're doing and how we're affecting our young people in this province. This province can be great again, and education is certainly going to be a part of that greatness.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I got my timing right. I move unanimous consent that the order of the House dated November 4, 2013, referring Bill 105, an Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act, 2013, to the Standing Committee on General Government be discharged and that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and that the committee meet for one day of public hearings and one day of clause-by-clause, as scheduled by the subcommittee of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Nice. Can I have a copy of that, please?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: You sure can.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Do we have unanimous consent for this? I heard a no. That one is defeated.

Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I stand today wishing I could be talking about jobs and the economy, but instead the government has shied away from the difficult reality that their failed policies have generated. So instead, here we are talking today about legislation that has been introduced to define a negotiation process. We not even talking about improving education.

I am joining this debate because it addresses an important issue that we do need to get off the table. In the aftermath of Bill 115, as we all know, the education

collaborative bargaining process was in total disarray. The importance of having a clear collective bargaining process when it comes to education is obvious. Bill 122 outlines what should be considered at the central bargaining table and what should be considered locally.

Also, this bill finally legislates a formal role for the crown in the process, and this is definitely a step forward.

So although the Liberal government is trying to save face by cleaning up the mess they made, they are starting to make some progress.

It's important to remember, however, that the framework is totally untested in practice at this point. All the formal stakeholders in the process are proceeding very cautiously. Nobody opposes it, but nobody really supports it either. So the keyword here, definitely, is caution.

One of the biggest unknowns regarding how the process will play out is obviously the interplay between the central and local levels and how government will participate. We simply don't know how well it will work yet. That is why it is so important that a sunset clause be added to this legislation so that it is reviewed after the next round of bargaining. It is a step forward to have a framework, but I'm sure there will be changes that need to be made once it's tested in the real world.

To a large extent, Mr. Speaker, the really important thing to notice here is not what's in this legislation but what isn't in the legislation. It changes the framework, but it doesn't change any substance. The most glaring omission is the failure to address regulation 274, which continues to wreak havoc on the hiring process for teachers across the province. Regulation 274 is single-handedly preventing thousands of eager, fresh young teachers from getting the valuable early career experience that they need. In simple terms, regulation 274 ranks teachers on occasional-teacher lists solely in terms of seniority; then it forces schools to give first dibs on permanent positions to the highest-ranked teachers. As a result, many exceptional young teachers—my colleague from Kitchener-Conestoga mentioned earlier that the best teacher in Ontario is out of work, simply because of seniority. Instead, young teachers like that gentleman are spending years on the occasional-teacher list instead of being in the classroom full time, where the kids really need them.

I want to emphasize that merit must be a consideration for hiring teachers. We all know that just because someone has been around the longest doesn't mean they're necessarily the best person for a job. Teacher hiring practices need to recognize this reality.

According to the *Globe and Mail*, in September, Premier Wynne admitted that regulation 274 may have been an over-correction. Really? Furthermore, according to the same article, the education minister stated that the current government is studying the legislation, looking for ways to tweak it to fix this problem.

Speaker, regulation 274 is not an over-correction that needs to be tweaked. It is bad policy that needs to be completely rethought.

The youngest in my family is currently in teachers' college, and she is just finishing up her first practice-teaching session. You know what? I am so, so proud of her, because when we hook up on the weekends, and I get a review of her week, I can tell with everything in me that she has hit her stride. She started university at Brock. She changed her program after second year, and she went into biology and mathematics. She went to Brock to play varsity fastball. She found her groove there. Now she has found her groove, and she's so excited about being in the classroom and making a difference. In some ways, she's paying it forward. She had amazing mentors and teachers and coaches as she went through high school, and it's her chance to give back a little bit, as well, and encourage people to be excited about mathematics and biology.

Imagine a young lady who can go in and coach any sport and also teach math and biology. According to some of my teaching friends, she would be a gem and be on the top of somebody's hiring list. But because of regulation 274, guess what? She is going to have to consider wading through all kinds of boards of education, fingers crossed, hoping she might get a call to supply.

Or worse yet, she may consider—while it would be an amazing experience, a lifetime experience—going abroad, or throughout Canada there are teaching opportunities as well. Do you know what's really sad about that, Mr. Speaker? She's pursuing her career that I know with everything in me that she absolutely loves and that she'll be wonderful at—but pursuing that career elsewhere because she can't get a job in her own province. It doesn't matter. It doesn't count. She will not have any seniority. She can go away for one year or two years—but come back to Ontario? Why bother? The experience that she has gained elsewhere means nothing. This is unacceptable, as we look forward and try to figure out a way to engage young people and keep them in our province.

It's interesting. From time to time, you hear the government say, "Unemployment levels have gone down." The Minister of Finance is very good at saying that. But, Speaker, I would suggest to you, unemployment rates have gone down because all the unemployed, all the young people, have left our province. It's a travesty, and Bill 122, as I said, does nothing to address the true issue at hand.

Well, you know what? We have to think about the hard work and the passion that brings people to the career of teaching. Regulation 274 is preventing these young people from taking their careers to the next level, and it's happening to thousands and thousands of people. It's a shame that this government doesn't get it and place a priority on our young people. They are our future. Instead, they would rather burden them with the debt that they've amassed over the last decade. What a thing. It just doesn't make any sense.

As I mentioned earlier, formal stakeholders in education bargaining processes are behaving cautiously because this bill creates uncertainty. They're not sure how it's going to play out. But potentially, the most important

education stakeholder group doesn't have a formal position on this legislation, because they are not engaged. I'm talking, of course, about the parents of the school-age children across the province, and, in turn, the students themselves. They've been completely blocked out of this process.

Parents and students are the ones that every collective bargaining session impacts the most, and they are consistently caught in the middle of every contract negotiation—unacceptable. And it is the parents and the taxpayers who always have to pay up in the end. Parents and students are the ones who suffer the impact of work-to-rule action, for example, but they are consistently excluded from the bargaining table. Their voices are consistently ignored.

Every parent across this province wants the best education for their child. They want the best teachers, the best curriculum and the most enriching extracurricular activities for their children. The education collective bargaining process has a profound effect on every aspect of the educational life of every child in Ontario, both inside and outside of the classroom. It's a glaring omission that parents in this province don't have a voice in this issue.

As we've mentioned many times before, there are many relevant issues that this bill does not address. Another important one is the looming crisis regarding education quality in the province. The education system in Ontario was once the envy of all other provinces in

this nation and countries across the world. Our education system was first-class. A decade of mismanagement by the Liberal government, however, has left this once great system as a shell of its former self.

For example, the Education Quality and Accountability Office, the organization that administers standardized tests across this province, has noted some concerning trends in recent years. While reading and writing skills have generally remained steady, and even increased slightly, math skills are becoming a serious problem. But, as I said before, someone in my family who wants to teach math, who actually majored in math, won't have a chance. She's going to have to go abroad; she's going to have to go outside of Ontario to do what she can to help students.

According to the National Post, the EQAO's data over the past five years has shown a steady decline in math performance. Only 57% of grade 6 students, for example, achieved the provincial standard in math. This is down from 63% in 2009.

It's clear that parents are seeing a huge problem here. Our party, the PC Party of Ontario, recognizes the issues here. We need to do better for our students.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I don't think we have enough time for questions and comments.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1754.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
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Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
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Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	

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Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
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Second Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 28 November 2013

Jeudi 28 novembre 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 28 November 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 28 novembre 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROTECTION OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA PROTECTION DU DROIT À LA PARTICIPATION AUX AFFAIRES PUBLIQUES

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 5, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 83, An Act to amend the Courts of Justice Act, the Libel and Slander Act and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act in order to protect expression on matters of public interest / *Projet de loi 83, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les tribunaux judiciaires, la Loi sur la diffamation et la Loi sur l'exercice des compétences légales afin de protéger l'expression sur les affaires d'intérêt public.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate? Further debate? Last call for further debate. The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure I have much to say on this bill, except that I know somebody should be saying something.

I suspect that the bill does many things. I think I'm more interested in section 25 of the bill, which amends the Libel and Slander Act, and states: "Any qualified privilege that applies in respect of an oral or written communication on a matter of public interest between two or more persons who have a direct interest in the matter applies regardless of whether the communication is witnessed or reported on by media representatives or other persons."

I'm concerned that often when you do read the media reports, it's hard to know how much of it is truthful.

With that being said, I'm not sure—I'd have to inquire of members of our caucus who, in fact, had the floor when last speaking on this. In my case, I have not prepared adequately for this morning's comments, so I might have to seek the advice of the Chair just exactly how I get out of this dilemma. I just sit down, I guess.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member always has an opportunity to take his seat, which then would stop that particular moment of time that he has to

speak; it's lost. But if he speaks to the bill, he has the floor as long as he wishes. If there's another rotation after you're seated, then we will continue the debate.

Mr. John O'Toole: I wouldn't like to lose my time. Had I known I was going to be speaking, I would have been more prepared. I thought someone else had the floor. I actually thought the NDP were supposed to have the floor. As such, I unfortunately boxed myself out. But anyway, I will—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will ask the member, in fairness, are you seeking unanimous consent to have your time removed and started over?

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, I seek unanimous consent to stand down my time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member is seeking unanimous consent to move this rotation. Agreed? Agreed.

So now, further debate: the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: It's a pleasure to rise before the House to speak about the bill proposed to address strategic lawsuits against public participation. To paint a stronger picture of what's going on, I'm going to tell a couple of stories. The impact of those stories will inform why this law is so important and why we need to move forward with it.

First and foremost, I think it's important to acknowledge the fact that the leader of the NDP, Andrea Horwath, raised this issue in the House a number of years ago because she saw the importance of democracy, the importance of dissent, and the fact that strategic lawsuits were silencing dissent and silencing democracy. Andrea Horwath brought forward this bill, and I am glad to see that, years after a panel was struck to address this issue of strategic lawsuits, the Liberal government has finally listened, implemented and moved forward on Bill 83.

This is an all-too-common scenario: Members of a particular community are gathered together because there is a certain development or project that's being proposed. Members of the community are concerned; they think that this project would not fit well with the community and would in fact either damage or impact the environment, their community lives or the fabric of their societies—some issue with this project or development. What happens is that those people who take on this issue and are leaders in the community, who rise up and say, "Listen, this is not something we want in our community. We don't want to see this development occur," are then hit with a strategic lawsuit. What happens is that they receive a letter from a law firm, or from a lawyer or

barrister, and the lawsuit essentially says that, for their comments in public, they're being sued, sometimes for upwards of millions of dollars.

Imagine that you receive a letter at home and it says you are being sued for \$6 million, and it's because you got up in your community one day and were speaking with people, saying, "Listen, we need to organize together. We need to oppose this project. We don't want this to be here." You receive a letter in the mail or you receive a letter by hand, and someone indicates you're being sued for \$6 million. That immediately has a chilling effect. When you open up that letter and see the words "\$6 million," and you don't think to ever see \$6 million in your lifetime, it can have a devastating impact on you.

First and foremost, you wish you had never spoken up in the first place. Secondly, you keep on thinking, "What can I do to get rid of this?", and that's all you think about. What happens is, the entire process which had engaged that individual—it engaged you; you had spoken up because your community was being affected by something. You had had the passion to organize your community members, or just to get up and speak. That entire passion has been snuffed out, has been subdued.

That, my friends, is one of the worst things that can happen in our society. The reason I say it's one of the worst things is because the pillar of freedom, the pillar of our free society, is the ability to get up and say, "I don't like something," simply the ability to get up and say, "I don't agree with what's going on," the ability to get up and say, "As a community, we don't want this to happen in our community." If we, as a government, are not protecting those voices, we're doing a great disservice to our citizens, to the people that we represent.

If we play out that scenario: You receive that letter. It has that chilling effect. You're immediately panicked and you have to go out and seek legal counsel, because most of us, with some notable exceptions, aren't familiar with the law system, aren't familiar with courts and, in fact, think of courts as a scary place that you don't want to go to. You may want to visit to see another case, but you certainly don't want to go there for your own case. And when it's you facing that threat of millions of dollars of lawsuits, you then have to seek out other legal counsel. It can be costly, and it can be long and drawn out and very frustrating.

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Now, after a lengthy court battle, and after having to put up some money to defend yourself, it may turn out that you are then exonerated. Often, it did turn out that people were exonerated. But the length of the matter, the threat of this potential settlement or potential action against you for millions of dollars, the initial upfront cost—all these factors—had such a chilling effect that that individual, first and foremost, wasn't continuing to engage in the civic process, the democratic process, and certainly in the future would be very reluctant or hesitant to do it again. That would be the scenario, but for some intervention on the part of the government.

So a number of great activists and strong community voices came forward and said that to stop this from happening, to stop this type of practice from occurring, we needed to implement some laws that would streamline the judge's ability to assess whether or not a particular lawsuit was simply a strategic lawsuit to silence someone or whether it was a genuine lawsuit. That was the problem; and the solution was, what can we do to make sure that there's a distinction between these vexatious and frivolous actions versus genuine actions? What can we do to ensure that actions that are frivolous, that don't have substance, that are simply meant to silence someone, are dealt with clearly, quickly and in a manner that protects the participant of public discourse, the activist or the community member who wants to raise their concerns or raise their voice? How do we protect those individuals and distinguish their cases from the cases that are truly genuine?

There was a committee struck, and it was an advisory panel that released a report in 2010. This was the Attorney General's Anti-SLAPP Advisory Panel. Now, the panel was made up of a number of very well respected members of both the bar, in terms of plaintiff and defendant side litigators, as well as members of the judiciary. They had enacted a number of recommendations; that was in 2010. So it's taken three years for this bill to finally make its way into the House and now we're starting to see some action.

One of the key components of this bill is an early dismissal mechanism. There have been a number of jurisprudences where judges basically saw a case come in and they thought, "This case is simply a tactic to silence this individual. There's actually absolutely no merit in this case and this case should never have made it this far." To answer those judges who kept on raising these concerns in decisions where they saw that this is clearly an issue, and because of the great work of a number of community groups—whether they are community advocates, environmental advocates, civic advocates, there are a number of groups who have put great work and effort into making sure this bill came forward. The number one criterion or one of the biggest concerns they wanted to see is they wanted to see that a judge would be able to look at a case and be able to dismiss it forthright or quickly, if it turned out to be one of those cases which was vexatious or frivolous or didn't have any substance.

On top of being able to dismiss a case quickly, the second concern was, how could we send a message to create a disincentive so that future plaintiffs, knowing the current framework, wouldn't bring forward a lawsuit, that if it wasn't based on some sort of substance, it would be not only dismissed but there would be a greater disincentive? There would be something, some message saying, "Don't do this again." The legislation proposed has a cost provision so that if it turns out to be something that's SLAPPED or something that the SLAPP legislation applies to and there is a quick dismissal of the case, the case is dismissed and thrown out, there's also a cost provision so that the party that was subject to this, the person

who got sued, if it turns out the lawsuit was meaningless, that person can then bring an application or that person can then receive costs for what they had to pay out of pocket for their legal defence. That's a strong disincentive.

I want to read out a number of quotes and examples of people who have been a subject to this: what they felt like, what were their feelings when they received that letter, when they received that hand-delivered lawsuit, when they received these threats to basically litigate. What did they feel like? What were their concerns? How did they take that threat or that feeling of pressure, knowing that there might be a lawsuit against them? I'm just going to read out some quotes from individuals who responded to and who were exposed to lawsuits. These are some of the concerns that were raised.

One quote was: "I feel threatened, harassed, and intimidated by Geranium's legal claims, and fear exposure to lawsuits and the costs associated with defending them."

Another quotation I have here is: "I do not write letters to the town, county, province or local papers in fear of repercussion from the Big Bay Point developers, Kimvar Enterprises Inc., and Mr. Earl Rumm."

Another quote was: "From fear of being implicated in a lawsuit myself, I would not write a letter or voice my personal opinions about the project in any way whatsoever."

Another quote was: "I do not have the funds or means to defend myself in a lawsuit, which increases my fear of publicly speaking out as an individual."

Another quotation that addressed the feelings that an individual felt was: "I would not testify at an OMB hearing with the lawsuits pending and the threat of new legal actions. I would not be able to defend myself financially from such a wealthy developer."

So the concern is that, while a person might be able to defend themselves—and it may not even be the case that the person feels that the lawsuit against them has any merit; they're not actually concerned, many of the times, that they thought they did something wrong and that maybe this lawsuit would actually generate a victory for the other side and they would end up having to pay the money. It was just the thought of having to defend it. The thought of having to spend that time in court to clear your name to defend against the allegation was so onerous and they were so fearful of that experience that that in and of itself was enough to silence them and to discourage them from participating.

In fact, one of the concerns that was raised was, how many people actually end up in one of these vexatious lawsuits? How many people actually end up getting sued for really no substance, just to silence them? In answer to that: It's not only the number of people who were actually sued and it was a lawsuit that was brought forward; it's actually the number of people who received letters. Because a letter from a wealthy developer or from someone with deep pockets threatening legal action in and of itself is so strong that the individual, the corporation, the de-

veloper or the larger player didn't need to take it to the next step. Simply putting forward that letter was enough to silence the public participation.

We can't track the number of letters that people received. We can't track the number of letters that went out to people threatening legal action that didn't end up resulting in a lawsuit, but they certainly ended up silencing the voices of the public. So it's certainly a big concern; it's certainly an area where we can do some work.

I mentioned Big Bay Point. Just to give you a scenario of the magnitude of lawsuits against individuals in Big Bay Point, there were nine separate lawsuits levelled against opponents for over \$100 million in damages. Just the number of the complainants that came forward—I can tell you that there were significant costs that had to be paid out of pocket for community members who just raised their concerns. They often would fight the case and no costs were given, so that even though they won—the community members who fought against this won—they still had to pay out of pocket to defend themselves; no costs were awarded.

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So what's happening in our society is something we really need to be aware of. In principle, the society we live in is supposed to be based on an idea that each individual has an equal vote and their voices are supposed to be respected in an equal manner. My personal status, my bank account and where I live in the community shouldn't impact my voice and my power to raise the concerns that I feel are appropriate. But what's happening is that your bank account and where you live and your personal background are impacting your ability to participate.

One of the ways your bank account impacts the way you can participate is in these strategic lawsuits. If you have deep pockets, as an individual, and you know that you can defend yourself against any lawsuit, you're going to be less fearful, less concerned about a lawsuit that's being levelled against you. But if you're someone who doesn't have those means, doesn't have those resources, then just receiving that threat has a devastating and chilling effect.

We want to ensure that, in whatever part we can as government, we bolster the individual's opportunity and ability to raise concerns so that we can bolster the community's ability to advocate for themselves or speak up on issues that matter. That's why it's so important that we level the playing field. When we have large developers, multinational corporations, levelling the lawsuits and we have individuals in the community who are struggling to make ends meet, the power imbalance is vast and the result is that because of that vast power imbalance, the voice of the individual is being silenced, is being quieted, is being subdued, is being oppressed. That's something we certainly can't condone, and we have to do whatever it takes to make sure we support the voice of the community, the individual.

There are a number of community members who have faced SLAPPs, and I want to talk about a couple of other

ones that have occurred. We think of SLAPPs as strictly being lawsuits from developers or corporations. There have actually also been health-related industries that have levelled lawsuits against individuals who have complained about issues. I know that our member from Timiskaming—Cochrane spoke about some of the folks who were affected in his riding, simply for speaking out on a health-related matter, on health concerns. You'd think that would be something that would be safe to talk about, that the delivery of health care services would be something you could get up and speak about. But members who spoke about that issue were met with lawsuits and were threatened with legal action, and it had a chilling effect and silenced a number of individuals in that respect.

Again, when we talk about these strategic lawsuits, it's not limited to just developers and corporations. There are, like we said, the health services. There are also members—we heard most recently about the individuals and trainers from Marineland. There was a series of articles that came out, talking about abuse of the animals at Marineland. They were investigated, and there was public outcry. Many members of the public cried out that this was improper; this was unfair. Whistle-blowers from Marineland who actually had first-hand testimony stood up and raised their concerns and said, "Yes, there are these concerns, there are these issues." Those trainers who raised concerns, hoping to add, to participate in public debate, talking about the mistreatment of animals—which you would think would be something that would be absolutely fair and acceptable—were then hit with lawsuits as well. The lawsuits, again, had the effect of silencing their input and silencing their public discourse, and it's certainly something we cannot condone.

Interjection.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: That's right. My colleague from Windsor—Tecumseh speaks about mayoral offices that employed similar tactics of threatening legal action to silence public participation. It's certainly something we don't condone and certainly something we don't like to see.

I want to give you another story, just to contrast what we're proposing to do. While I wholeheartedly support the idea of protecting public participation—and our leader, Andrea Horwath from the Ontario NDP, brought forward a bill years ago addressing this issue, so it's certainly something that we've advocated for, and we're happy that finally the government is moving on this. But we also have to be cognizant of a particular concern: that when dealing with this issue—and this analogy has been used a number of times, and I really like the analogy, because it's very appropriate—we need to make sure we're not using a sledgehammer to address a problem that can be dealt with by a scalpel.

I want to give you one story that I had the privilege and the opportunity to hear first-hand from one of the participants on the legal side. It was the Hill v. Scientology lawsuit. The Hill v. Scientology case, which I want to tell you a little bit about, actually has a lot of insight. It

can provide us with a lot of insight into an area where we need to be a little bit careful with the way we implement this bill, so that we take into consideration the other side, and that we don't create an atmosphere or a climate where there is absolutely no way to defend your good name and where people can say truly libelous and defamatory comments against an individual—level them against or accuse someone of them—and not have justice on those matters.

I'll tell you the story of Hill v. Scientology. It's a lengthy story. It's one of the hallmark court decisions on defamation law in Canada, but I'll give you the Coles Notes version that I received—actually, probably even more reduced than I heard it. But what happened in Hill v. Scientology was that there was a crown prosecutor by the name of Mr. Hill, and the prosecutor was involved with a particular search warrant scenario. He was known for being a young and quite skilled advocate, and he went on to become a Superior Court judge, who I had the pleasure of appearing in front of a number of times as a criminal defence lawyer, and I have the utmost respect for His Honour.

As a young prosecutor, this individual was well known for being an expert in search warrants and, though being young, he had garnered a great deal of respect and a great reputation for being a search warrant expert in the office. There had been a case and a scenario where there were certain activities that were going on at the Church of Scientology that required some investigation. Search warrants were executed, and documents were seized.

On the other side, there were certain concessions made. Basically, the Church of Scientology was able to negotiate and to work out an agreement that certain documents would not be released. Consequently, there was some confusion in terms of the law that was applied, but more importantly, there was confusion in terms of what information was to be sealed and what information was not to be sealed.

So, Mr. Hill acted in a professional manner and acted appropriately, but there was some grey area with respect to which documents were sealed and unsealed, and some documents were released and were put into public. The Church of Scientology took the approach that it was Mr. Hill's fault, and they hired some of the best advocates at the time, some of the best lawyers at the time, and they commenced a lawsuit against Mr. Hill.

What happened was that a young prosecutor who was trying to do his job to protect his community, to represent the interests of the public, to represent the interests of the residents of Ontario, saw himself facing, again, a multi-million-dollar lawsuit. The lawsuit didn't only say that he had perhaps released sealed documents, but it had gone in to attack his reputation. It attacked him for being someone who was not of high moral standards. It attacked all sorts of areas of his character and, in fact, left at its own, would have basically ended his career.

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He was a young prosecutor with a young family and young children, and this lawsuit against him was level-

ling such accusations that, as a public crown prosecutor, his entire career would have ended there. It was basically a defamation, a libel, that was brought against him. He was able to defend himself because he was able to assert that what he had done by speaking out, because he was a public—if we apply the current laws in this circumstance, the current SLAPP legislation, the Church of Scientology, by stating that he was a person of low moral character or someone who had lied, someone who had misrepresented, someone who had not acted in good faith as a lawyer—one can see some of the problems.

They were entitled to raise concerns about someone who is a public figure, who is a public prosecutor, the crown prosecutor, that would make sense. They would be able to raise concerns about him because that would be in the public interest. Then, what would happen currently, something that's quite novel, is that Mr. Hill would then have to prove that none of that was true, instead of the normal way in which these things continue: that the person alleging the misconduct would have to prove that there was misconduct, would have to show that, yes, Mr. Hill had done this wrong or that wrong. The current law would actually have Mr. Hill have to prove to the court that he hadn't done anything wrong.

I give this example because we need to make sure that people in public positions, who individuals in the community might very well have the right to raise concerns about, who very well might have the right to criticize, who very well might have the right to say there's something they don't like about what's going on with that individual—they would satisfy that public participation requirement: There is a public interest in raising a concern. But we don't want to make it the case that there could be open season on public officials or anyone who is involved with the public.

So we need to be cognizant of that issue, because the Hill v. Scientology story turned out that at the end, Mr. Hill was able to win his case and was able to receive a settlement and went on to continue his career and clear his name, but it still had a devastating impact. If you think about it, a young lawyer facing allegations of misconduct, of not participating in good faith—there's all sorts of character assassination, and if your job is to represent individuals in a court setting as a lawyer, it could have devastating impacts.

We want to make sure that the power imbalance that we're seeking to address doesn't actually impede people from rightful and proper litigation. If we look at the test—and I think the test has a lot of merit, because it's based on the Anti-SLAPP Advisory Panel. One of the key parts of the test that was set out is to look at—there's a standard, there's a law of libel and defamation that has a long history, 300 years of jurisprudence from the United Kingdom and into Canada, so it has long-established principles. The starting point for libel is that there are comments made in public; those comments have a defamatory impact on your character, on your reputation, and they're untrue. If you can show that someone made an untrue comment about you in public that certainly im-

pacts your character, you could bring a defamation action. That's how developers and large corporations were bringing libel. An individual was basically bringing forward a concern, and they were basically attacking that individual because he was attacking the reputation of the company. So they were attacking their reputation, and it was untrue.

The problem is when developers like Big Bay Point brought forward these concerns, what they were doing was they were not basing it on any actual attack on their reputation. Their purpose was simply and only to silence that participation.

Now, what the SLAPP legislation is proposing is that, at its core, the principle that's going to govern the anti-SLAPP legislation, that's going to govern or that's going to inform the judiciary, the judges who are involved with dealing with these type of lawsuits, that principle is going to be, what is, first of all, the concept of the public interest and the concept of public participation? So that principle that we want to engage people in civic participation, that principle that we want to make sure that the public is participating in our democracy, is going to be a governing principle. So the framework for any decision about whether to dismiss a lawsuit or to allow a lawsuit will begin with that founding principle, that we want to foster public discourse and public participation; that's going to be the foundation. If we can build on that, the decision will flow from whether or not, first of all, it supports this starting point, this founding principle: Is it in the public interest? Is it promoting public participation?

One area of analysis which, I think, can be tweaked some more but has a lot of merit and has some foundation in principles is, how do you distinguish between a meritorious libel suit or defamation claim and one that has no merit whatsoever? One of the principles or one of the ways to assess that is, does the public expression in question, whether it's a comment that someone makes out loud in public or something that's written or something that's picked up on the radio—if that expression satisfies the criteria of actually being based on some merit and being based on the standard principles of libel, there's an analysis about the actual impact to the individual, whether it's a corporation or an individual. And there's a cost analysis: Can the individual—the plaintiff, the one who's bringing forward the action—show that there has been a loss? Can they show that there's been a financial—some objective loss? And if there can be a loss shown, then the action can continue.

If we just sit back and think about this for a second, in one respect, if we apply this, perhaps, to a developer, there's a weighing here now. So if I can get up in public and get up in the community and say that I am opposed to a particular project—"I don't like this project developing. It doesn't make sense. I'm opposed to it. I think that it's going to harm our community because it's going to"—let's say the development is a shopping mall in a small community that has a quaint downtown, and the location of that development is going to basically impact the heritage or the beauty or the accessibility of that Main

Street in that small community. And members of the community get up and say, "Listen, we don't want the shopping mall here in this particular location. It's going to impact the heritage of our historic downtown. It's going to impede the access to this area. We want to make sure that it's kept alive and vibrant. This particular shopping mall is not going to work here."

Now, if community members gather together and start complaining about this and make sure that their voices are heard and say, "This is not something we want here in our community. It's going to have a devastating impact on our main street. It's going to impact the culture and heritage of our community," the first step of the analysis would be, is this in the public interest? Certainly it's in the public interest because the community is talking about something that matters to them. Certainly it's in the public interest, so then we would engage the anti-SLAPP legislation.

The developer would have to show, balancing the concerns that they actually had, that they were suffering a loss, that there was a financial loss to them. It's in this area that we need to be somewhat careful—and I thank the ministry staff for briefing me on this particular issue—because of the analysis with respect to looking at the costs, and if the costs can be shown, would that be enough then to allow the case to continue?

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There's a weighing now. They weigh the value of the public participation against the cost to the company, the developer or whatever the entity is. In weighing the cost and the benefit, the jurisprudence so far—or the way that the law is crafted; my apologies—suggests that because public participation is valued at such a high degree, the public participation would outweigh the cost to the company in this regard, because this is one of the basic scenarios that would happen.

My only concern is, how do we make sure that in cases like this, which are clearly something that would cry out for anti-SLAPP legislation, would cry out for strategic-lawsuit-against-public-participation protection—because we have exactly what we envisioned: community members trying to organize and advocate for something that means something to them and, on the flip side, the developer actually has an argument that there might be a cost. They might not be able to build their shopping mall, and they might have a significant cost.

So that's one area where, at the end of the day, in that analysis, that type of public participation is something we should protect and encourage. Community members should be able to rally around that. They should have a say in where things are built in their communities. People should have a say in if a particular development proceeds or not. That is appropriate. If that doesn't occur and if those individuals are silenced, then that's something we really need to take a hard look at.

On the flip side, though—and I just bring this scenario up because I want to encourage some thought. I want to encourage some consideration of this, and I've learned from a number of people far wiser than I am, far more

experienced than I am, that a truly measured and thoughtful approach is to really balance both sides of the equation, to really look at the flip side, the inverse side. One of the best ways to look at the flip side or the other argument is to put yourself in their shoes. I think that's one of the easiest ways to do it, because then you can start to feel what it would be like.

I can appreciate this to some degree. I think all of us in this House can appreciate this potential scenario to some degree: If we have elected officials who are active in their communities, are fighting for the rights of their communities, are raising concerns and taking on tackling hard issues, what if people like that are then challenging a particular institution? Let's say they are taking on someone like, say, a particular industry. Someone gets up and says, "I'm going to take on the payday loan providers. The payday loan providers, in my estimate, in my esteem, are doing some sort of—the practices that they engage in are completely unethical and improper." Let's say one of us gets up and advocates on behalf of the people, and takes on this issue. Now, if someone who had an interest in payday loans were to then launch a series of letters or a public outcry against the member, and were to say, "Listen, this person doesn't know their facts. They are a liar, or they are being persuaded in an unethical manner to raise this issue"—they could say that they are someone who is corrupt, and attack the character of one of us, of a public official, whether it's an MPP, a city councillor or a federal MP.

The public participation element is there. The public interest is there, because every member of the community has a public interest in actually speaking up about whether they like the work or don't like the work of their elected official. They should be able to say that, but what if all the allegations are false? What if all the allegations alleging that the person is corrupt, that they are unethical and all these other things are simply untrue? It's an attack on the character of a public official.

In terms of the SLAPP legislation, it would be in the public interest, and I wouldn't disagree with that. It is in the public interest. But what if it's just fundamentally untrue? They're just lies. If the person bringing forward this allegation was saying that the public official is a fraudster and they were convicted of fraud, well, that would be very easy to deal with. You could pull up your criminal record and show that you had no fraud on your record ever. Then you would be able to bring forward the lawsuit and say, "Listen, I've proven that I've never been charged with fraud. Indicating that I've been convicted of fraud is clearly libel, clearly defaming my character," and you can attack that.

But what if it's something a bit more subtle, that this person is corrupt, not suggesting that you've been charged with an offence, but just saying that this is a corrupt official? What would you do as a public official to say, "No, I'm not corrupt"? How could you prove that you're not corrupt? You could get up and say, "I'm not," but what would you be able to do?

This scenario was raised to me, and I only bring it up because I like to look at both sides of the issue. In this

particular area, I do see the concern that some people might be able to—I think a lot of us have thick skin, and that's fine and it's a part of the job. But I think there are a lot of talented people that want to get involved in politics, a lot of amazing, vibrant, potential new leaders who want to get involved in politics and get involved in representing their communities, who might be deterred from the thought that any sort of complaint, any sort of allegation, could be levelled against them because they're in the public, because they're a public official, that any sort of allegation can be brought against them and they wouldn't really have much of a remedy. They wouldn't really have much of a way to challenge that in court.

The reason why I bring that up is because I think that there is already a lot of mudslinging that goes on, and there are already a lot of attacks on character, as opposed to attacks on policies and principles. I have, in my small way, tried as much as possible to encourage that, and I know that the Speaker has always tried to do that as well: that we want to make sure that when we attack a particular idea, we attack the idea, we attack the principle, the policies, and we try to leave the person out of it. The reason why I think that's so important is because many people who are talented may have some things in their past they don't want necessarily to be confronted with and have to deal with. If politics becomes about attacking someone's history, attacking someone's character, not attacking their policies—and there's more than enough ammunition to attack people's policies, more than not. I think that's the type of discourse that we should be supporting.

The reason why I bring this up is because the way this law is crafted, there is this opening that would allow for attacks on anyone who is in the public interest. I could see that being applied with the argument that was brought to me, that it could be applied to public officials in a very easy manner. So that's something to consider. It doesn't change my wholehearted support of this law, but what I really want to encourage is that we need to look at all the factors when crafting legislation, particularly legislation that is going to be one of the most progressive pieces of legislation in the world.

There's only one other jurisdiction in the world that has anti-SLAPP legislation, and that's Quebec. Quebec is a civil law society. They're not common law like Canada and America and the UK and Australia. Their civil law system is more similar to Europe, France and countries of that nature. They're the first civil law jurisdiction to bring forward anti-SLAPP legislation, which is one of the first of its kind as well. So Ontario is actually on the cusp of being an innovator, being one of the first to implement something that would be very, very progressive, and I'm pretty proud that we're actually bringing it forward.

I want to go back and talk about, again, some of the underlying importance of this bill, why this bill is so important and why we really need to move forward on it. When I think about how I got involved in politics in the first place, it was a group of community activists that had worked on a number of issues, that I had the great privi-

lege and honour of working with, whether it was groups that were working on reduction of poverty—more so the eradication of poverty—whether it was groups that were working on rights of immigrants and new Canadians, student groups who were working on tuition fee reductions and peace groups that were working on movements to discourage war across the world and encourage peace instead, or groups that were working on human rights initiatives, whether human rights initiatives were about the human rights abuses in countries around the world, including, but definitely not limited to, human rights abuses in India against a number of community members involving Christian, Muslim and Sikh faiths, whether it was in China and the human rights abuses of Tibetans, or whether it was in Sri Lanka and the abuses that were suffered by the Tamils in Sri Lanka by the government.

0950

These community activists were, on a daily basis, participating in democracy, raising concerns and challenging some significant players. They were raising their voices against some very powerful people. The thought that, throughout it all, they could have been charged, in some cases, through unfair laws that didn't allow for public protests—but that's another issue and we'll deal with that on another day when we talk more about some of the violations that occurred under G20. But the thought that these activists, these community workers, could have been served lawsuits, or could have been sued or threatened, for their actions is discouraging. They were doing some great work, and they were participating in democracy in a very vibrant way.

It was actually those activists, those community workers and those advocates that encouraged me in the first place—I say “encouraged.” I use the word very loosely. They encouraged me to get into politics, and I think of how we can protect future activists, or future community advocates. We talk about the term “activist.” Sometimes it's as simple as someone in the community who has never in their life ever written a letter to the newspaper, has never spoken at a protest, has never championed a cause, someone who's never spoken on a microphone in their life, but there is an issue that comes up in the community, and they feel like they have to stand up and do something about it.

For those people, the thought that there are so many people like them who have been concerned and who wanted to raise an issue and were silenced because they received a letter in the mail, were silenced because they were brought to court, offends me and it troubles me. It shouldn't be the case. It shouldn't be the case that someone with deeper pockets than someone else can just write a letter and silence the other person. That's just fundamentally flawed and unfair. That's what I think is one of the starting points of why it's so important.

I've said this a number of times, and I'm hoping the government is listening to this, because a number of times in this session—when we came back in September, I questioned the government's priorities, because we were discussing laws like Bill 55, which was a law which I

acknowledge is something the community wanted. They wanted wireless agreement protection. It was a consumer services bill. It was something important. But there was already a wireless code that was implemented federally—there's a federal wireless code that goes above and beyond what the provincial code does: It protects us when it comes to our wireless agreements.

I know many people—I'm sure you'll nod when you hear this—have problems with their cellphone contracts. Their bills are too high: the roaming charges, the data charges. It's unfair; it's unclear. They can't cancel the contracts. That's all true. But when we had a wireless code that was implemented federally, and the government chose to bring forward this bill again provincially when there was already a federal bill, I got up and said that, yes, we want wireless protection, but we already have something federally.

What we don't have: We don't have anti-SLAPP law protection federally. Let's bring forward Bill 83. Let's bring forward the anti-SLAPP legislation. If you're serious about implementing this bill, if you're serious about protecting public participation, then bring forward this bill.

I challenged the government to do it a number of times. Any time I got up for questions and comments I said, "That's fine. We're talking about wireless agreements. We're talking about this other bill. We're talking about that bill." But when it came to this bill, Bill 83, a bill where there was no other federal legislation—it's a no-cost bill. It's not going to cost the government anything. It's not going to cost the taxpayer dollars in any way. It's not going to cost the treasury. But what it would do is fundamentally protect public participation. It would fundamentally protect our foundation of democracy, which is the ability to dissent, the ability to get up and say, "No, I don't agree with this; no, I don't want this to be here."

That's such an important right. I can't speak enough about how important that right is, that at a starting foundation, at a basic level for any free society, people should be able to get up and talk about what's going on with the communities. It shouldn't even be a question. It shouldn't be something that we even need to think about. It should be natural, it should be unquestionable that people should be able to get up and say, "Hey, I don't like this," "I do like this," "I want this. I don't want that," in their communities, in their province, in their country. They should be able to do that. That should not be a question. The fact that it was a question, the fact that it was even possible that you could silence someone for participating in democracy, for raising a question, for getting up and voicing their concern—the fact that that was even subject to lawsuits is just so troubling and so disconcerting.

So I implore the government: Let's move on this, then. It's such an important principle, such an important thing. Why aren't we doing anything about this? Even to date, I think this bill has only been called two times, and maybe this is the third time. And how long ago was this bill introduced? The government is not serious about this bill.

How many times have we had the opportunity to debate this bill? How many times has the bill been brought forward? I'm imploring you all—I know some of you are listening. This is a serious bill. This is something that's important. This is something that will help our democracy. This would be a hallmark for our province. This would set us up as innovators, someone who's leading instead of someone who's falling behind. This is a bill that we could look up to and say, "We protected democracy. We protected those members in our community who wanted to raise their concerns. We protected people who were participating in democracy. We're encouraging public participation."

This is a good thing, but we need to make sure it's given the priority it deserves and requires. Up to date, I question the priority that this government has given this bill, and I ask you to start prioritizing it. I ask you to stop relegating it to the side and start putting it at the forefront. I ask you to stop avoiding dealing with this issue and to put it at the top of your agenda.

This is something we need to deal with immediately. We have a great opportunity to address it now. Let's get this done. Let's get this bill moving. Let's make sure it gets the time in debate that it requires, and let's also make sure that when we're talking about a bill that protects public participation, we don't suggest in any way that we want to discourage the participation of the members here to talk about this bill, because I fully believe in open discourse and debate, particularly on a bill that talks about public participation. I'm hoping that no member gets up and says, "I think you've spoken enough on this bill." Let people speak as much as they need to, but let's actually get this bill moving forward. Let's give it the time it requires, let's give it the priority—and let's be honest, because up to date, the Liberal government has not given this bill the priority it deserves, has not given it the time it needs in the House to make sure it gets passed, and I want to make sure that changes.

So I'm hoping that either before this House rises for winter break, or very soon when the House returns after the break, there can be a time when I'm sitting in committee, I'm voting on amendments to this bill and I see that this bill gets back into third reading and, in this 42nd assembly, this bill passes. Then we can all hold our heads high in that we were part of a process, we were part of bringing forward a law which was one of the first of its kind in the common law and really protected public participation.

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Just in summary of what the bill actually does, I think it's important to highlight some of the key components of the bill. When we move forward, there are areas where we're going to need to amend this bill to make sure that it's tighter, that it doesn't have some unintended consequences, and we should definitely look to some of the legal experts in this area to make sure that we get their input on it.

Some of the key components of the bill that we have to focus in on and that are some of the hallmarks of the

bill: One is that as a general principle, what we're hoping to achieve, and what Andrea Horwath, as the leader of the party, brought forward years ago with her anti-SLAPP legislation, is that we want to make sure that people are provided immunity from civil liability when they're engaging in public discourse, in legitimate speech and public participation. Basically speaking, when people speak out in public, we're going to make sure that they're not subject to any lawsuits because of that.

The second thing is, if a lawsuit is brought forward, we want to make sure there's a quick way to get that lawsuit before a judge to look at it and say, "This is one of those cases where it's a strategic lawsuit. I can tell, based on these principles. Public participation is important. There's really no cost to this corporation or this developer or the person who's bringing forward the claim. Let's dismiss this case outright." We need to have that.

We need to look at the onus-reversing principle carefully, because we want to make sure we protect or insulate against the imbalance of power. We have people with deep pockets—you know, multi-million dollar corporations or developers—versus people struggling to make ends meet. When we have this imbalance of power, we want to make sure it's easier for the public participant, for the member of the community, to actually defend themselves so that the onus is reversed in a manner that puts the burden on the person with the deeper pockets. But at the same time, we want to make sure that it doesn't preclude the ability to bring forward non-vexatious or non-frivolous, proper, good, legitimate libel or defamation lawsuits.

The disincentive—we have to be very careful as well, because I agree very strongly that a disincentive that minimizes the imbalance of power in any way possible is something we want to encourage. A financial disincentive with respect to costs could do that, could make sure that that power imbalance that exists is diminished, is reduced, and that's something that I support. We also have to make sure that that doesn't, again, impede proper and legitimate defamation suits coming forward, and that we tailor this to really narrow in on the vexatious litigations, these strategic lawsuits, the ones that are brought to silence people.

In terms of the protection, like I was talking about, in terms of being an innovator, I want to make sure it's clear: We wouldn't be innovators in all of the common law; we would be innovators in Canada. There's only one other province in Canada that has this legislation, which is Quebec. We would be the first common-law jurisdiction in Canada to have it, and the second province. There's a number of other jurisdictions in the United States that have this anti-SLAPP protection, but we would be the first common-law in Canada to have it, and one of the first countries, after the United States, to be implementing such a protection.

In closing, I just want to drive home my last point and make sure that it's heard loud and clear: Public participation and particularly dissent—the right to dissent, the right to disagree—are the hallmarks of our society, the

hallmarks of a free and democratic society, a free and democratic province and country, and we need to make sure we protect that principle. We need to make sure we protect the ability to dissent, the ability to get up and oppose and disagree with something, to complain about things. We need to make sure that we give this bill the priority it deserves. Like I said, if the government is serious about passing it, the government then has to give it the time to make sure it gets passed. To date, it has only been called two times, three times? That's not enough to make sure this bill gets passed.

Again, I implore you: Make this bill a priority. It's a no-cost bill, it's something that's important and it would be a strong step forward for Ontario. We would be leaders in this country as the first common-law jurisdiction to pass it, and the second province. It would be a proud moment when we can stand up and vote in support of public participation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I've listened intently for the past hour to the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton regarding Bill 83 that's in front of us today. Basically, the bill in front of us amends three things: It amends the Courts of Justice Act, the Libel and Slander Act and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act in order to protect expression on matters of public interest.

What we're doing basically is trying to prevent—more than prevent—frivolous lawsuits that can be brought by either developers or persons who get involved in a lawsuit. If the developer wants to intimidate the people who are expressing concern about the bill, then this is a way to put a test in place, which this bill does, and then it also does two other things regarding matters similar to this. It amends the Courts of Justice Act. Also, in the final section, it amends the Libel and Slander Act and amends the Statutory Powers Procedure Act to provide submissions so that if someone complains, they can apply for costs without having to go before a judge orally. They can just do it in writing.

But the member offered other key points, and I just wanted to say regarding the issue of time spent here that the bill got introduced not too long ago, on June 4. On September 25, the Attorney General spoke, followed by the opposition party. On November 28, today, the third party has a chance to speak. I would just comment to the member that we have had this bill in front of us for a while, but we are proceeding. There are over 77 bills in front of us here on the order paper. I'm sure the Attorney General and the House leader want to bring this forward and deal with it as soon as possible, and I can assure you of that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I certainly commend the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton for consuming an hour on a bill that most of us have difficulty digesting because it does amend some very technical—these are three particular sections of our justice system, the Courts of Justice

Act, as well as the Libel and Slander Act and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act. But I think in its simplest form, it prevents abuse and intimidation for persons who could become liable or intimidated.

I really ask—I know the member. I have great respect. He is a lawyer. He's done the bar and he's articulate in legal lingo. Without being too assertive here, I wonder if he's actually issued one of those intimidating letters himself on behalf of his clients, to sort of push back that liability about your client—

Interjection.

Mr. Rob Leone: Table it.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like him to table that kind of thing, if he could, because as a lawyer—and I know a few people who are lawyers who know that the law can use the power of the word and the pen to influence outcomes. Certainly in civil matters I think it's often done where people have more power. I would say that in civil matters, the person with the most money wins. Basically, you can delay procedures, avoid follow-up and miss court dates and all these kinds of things.

I think there's good intent, and I have it on good assurance from our critic from York-Simcoe that we would be supporting the bill. What's needed here for all members is a lot more discussion on the bill, so we have a full understanding of, are we diminishing some of the powers on either side of the litigant or the person being accused? I think it's important that those rights are protected as well.

Our justice system is independent of the legislative branch. As such, I'm sure that the Attorney General would be following the procedures and such that no one would lose their rights.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. The member for Algoma-Manitoulin.

1010

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's always an honour to be in the House, and I say this with all earnesty, to have the privilege to hear our member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton explain his views. What I took back from his comments were actually four points: the cost of speaking up, the protection of those speaking up, the processes that those individuals go through and also making sure that there's a level playing field so that everybody has the opportunity to speak up.

The cost of speaking up—in his comments he talked about basically the roller coaster ride that individuals go through when they receive that lawsuit letter. They are filled with anguish and desperation, wondering what they're going to do, the fact that they're being threatened this way and the effect it has on that individual by silencing their voice. It's an effective way of actually silencing that voice. So it's really important for us to look at protecting those voices and make sure that we separate the ones who are actually speaking up for the rights of individuals and the rights of their communities, for their interests, and making sure that those frivolous allegations are dealt with expediently, and that we deal with that through the process.

He talked about how we can empower our decision-makers to make sure that they have the ability not only to determine which ones have merits or others that don't, but there's actually a penalty that is going to be imposed on those that are just trying to silence those voices. That is very key for us to having a just society. He also talked about making sure that there's a level playing field, making sure that the people who are going to speak up do have the opportunity to have their voices heard, because we should be embracing public participation; we should be making sure that those rights are rightfully protected at all costs.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Mario Sergio: I'd like to add some comments on Bill 83, which was just presented by Minister Gerretsen, the Attorney General, and the comments made by the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton. Speaker, I know that this bill has received considerable attention. It's good to see that it's being supported by both sides of the House. It stems from the fact that the so-called freedom of speech is really being trampled by greedy developers and very-well-oiled lawyers as well—no offence to any lawyers in the House. The fact is I've spent too many years watching developers coming in, making applications and running roughshod over the local people. The local people have been practically told at open meetings, "If you dare not to support this project, be ready to come to court." There is nothing more intimidating to the poor public than to be told very publicly by high-paid lawyers that they will be sued if they speak against a particular project. This is not freedom of speech. This is not how we do things here in Ontario, in Canada.

This piece of legislation, Bill 83, even though it's going through second reading, and as much as we want to talk about it a lot and get more out of it and into it, I would say is something that we should speed up, because the public demands protection from legislators, from us. I hope this will go through quickly. I hope that it will come back very quickly so we can give the public the protection that they deserve. I hope that this will be going to the House as quickly as possible.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton, you have two minutes.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I am very thankful for all the comments that were shared today, and particularly, je suis très heureux que mon ami d'Algoma-Manitoulin a résumé mes propos en deux minutes. Ce que j'ai dit en plus de 50 minutes, il l'a dit en seulement deux minutes. Mais c'est vraiment une question de légalité et une question de liberté. On a la responsabilité de protéger les lois et les droits des personnes qui voudraient dire « Non ».

We have the responsibility to protect the people who want to get up and simply say, "No, I don't like this. I don't agree with this. I don't support this." It's a fundamental principle that we need to support, and I thank all the members who have added their voice to this debate. I look forward to hearing more support.

I want to close on my final reminder, and I can't say this enough because it's so important. The member from one of the Scarborough ridings indicated that this bill has been brought forward, introduced and spoken on by the Attorney General and by the critic for the Conservatives, and now by the NDP. That's only three times. That's not enough. We need to give this bill more priority. If we're serious about making sure this bill gets passed, we need to give it the time that it requires and we need to give it the priority it requires.

If we're serious in this House about protecting the rights of public participation, then I implore the Liberal government to make sure this bill gets adequate time in the House so that it does get passed, and so that we can stand up on third reading and support a bill which would declare very loudly and clearly in the jurisdiction of Ontario that we support public participation and we support the right to dissent.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): This House now stands recessed until 10:30 a.m.

The House recessed from 1016 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm excited to welcome from Lambton county, here to discuss OMPF funding at Queen's Park today, Warden Todd Case, mayor of Lambton Shores Bill Weber and general manager of Lambton county John Innes.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to welcome Christopher Filice and his teacher Jay Kearsey and the grade 5 class from Royal St. George school here in Toronto. I hope that your visit to Queen's Park today will be a good addition to your civics class.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm delighted to introduce Adam Tomlinson, a co-op student working in my community office in Whitby, who's here today to observe the proceedings at question period. Welcome, Adam.

Mr. Paul Miller: It's my pleasure to introduce some of my brothers from steel in Sault Ste. Marie who are here today. I have Richard Beall, Paul Chlebus and John Notte—and a special guest, my good friend Joe Krmpotich and his wife, Sherry; Joe is also a Sault Ste. Marie councillor. Last but not least, my wife Carole Paikin-Miller is here.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I am honoured to welcome to the gallery today Parminder Singh from my hometown of Brampton. Parminder was one of the founders of the Punjabi-language Hockey Night in Canada broadcast that has a dedicated following from my constituents in Brampton–Springdale and across the country. Parminder also had a role in the movie *Speedy Singhs*. On behalf of the Legislature, welcome.

Mr. Grant Crack: C'est un grand plaisir pour moi de souhaiter la bienvenue au maire de Hawkesbury, M. René Berthiaume—also the president and warden of the united counties of Prescott-Russell. Welcome.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'm privileged today to welcome some visitors from India. We have here Mr. Karamvir Saini, who's the spokesperson for the chief minister—which is the Premier—of a state in India called Haryana. Welcome. Along with Mr. Saini are Gulab Sani, Hardarshan Singh and Ranjit Delai. Welcome to all.

Hon. Jeff Leal: It's a pleasure for me to introduce in the members' east gallery Dr. Lucie Blouin and her son Stephen Motyer, who are guests of mine here today. They won a lunch with their MPP. We look forward to them enjoying question period here this morning.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to welcome the grade 5 class from Timberbank Junior Public School, teacher Chrissy Corrieri and assistant Kathy Viapiana. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On behalf of the member from Ajax–Pickering to celebrate page Najat Halane are: mother, Fathia; father, Abdi; and sisters, Hayat and Fatima. Welcome.

On behalf of the member from Mississauga–Erindale for page Spencer Johne: father, Michael Johne; sister, Catherine Johne; and grandmother, Mrs. Von Essen. They are here visiting as well.

Welcome to all our guests.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to introduce Dr. Rosemary Sadlier, who is here representing the Ontario Black History Society. She's here for the debate this afternoon of Bill 125, the Lincoln Alexander Day Act—the second and hopefully third reading of that bill this afternoon.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Very interesting introduction.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'd like to introduce and congratulate Danny Strong, who is a member of our staff here at Queen's Park, on the occasion of his 35th birthday.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm sure he appreciates that one too.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CHRIS MAZZA

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Health: Yesterday, the entire Liberal caucus gave Chris Mazza a standing ovation—

Interjections.

Mr. Frank Klees: —in response to the Premier's endorsement of his right to practise emergency medicine at the Thunder Bay hospital. Here is what a medical doctor practising in Fort Frances had to say in an email in response to that endorsement by the Premier yesterday: "I hope he meets a patient and/or family that was harmed by the performance ... of Ornge. He may finally get a realistic feel for how destructive and incompetent he was."

This minister fired Chris Mazza for that incompetence. She called him a liar and is suing him to recover health care funds that he siphoned into his own pocket. But

today, he is back on the ministry's payroll and practising emergency medicine.

What evidence does the minister have that Chris Mazza has recovered from his mental breakdown, his incompetency and his disrespect for our health care system?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please.

Before we continue, when the question is being put, I would appreciate from the same side no other comments, and when the question is being put, I would appreciate no comments from the other side.

The same is true with the answer: No comments on that side; no comments on that side. Let's keep it there.

Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite has a remarkable history of twisting what actually happened, and I would say that this is just another—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will ask the Minister of Rural Affairs to come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, you did.

I'm also going to ask the minister to be very cautious of what her verbiage is. I am loath to think she would assume that any kind of language that is unparliamentary will be used. I caution her.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, you're making it difficult for me, but what I will say is that the member opposite has a remarkable history of—not getting his facts right. This is just one more example.

Yesterday—he's quite right—the members of the Liberal caucus did give the Premier a standing ovation. The members of the Liberal caucus gave the Premier a standing ovation because she talked about the importance of due process, and that is exactly the principle, which the Premier talked about, that we endorse on this side of the House. There is a process. We respect that process.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: The principle I want to speak to is the principle of doing the right thing because it's the right thing to do. No one is asking the minister or the Premier to interfere with accreditation. We are simply asking her to do the responsible thing.

The minister knows that this Chris Mazza refused to appear at a parliamentary committee, claiming mental incapacity. She knows that she called him a liar. She knows that she is suing him to recover precious health care dollars that he siphoned into his own pocket. Has the minister asked for a report from the College of Physicians and Surgeons? Has she asked the person who hired Dr. Mazza for the report on which he based his decision that he was mentally competent and was in good health and proper health to, in fact, practise at the emergency ward

of the Thunder Bay hospital? What evidence does she have to allow this man—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Health?

1040

Hon. Deborah Matthews: In fact, the member opposite is asking that I interfere with due process, and I will not do that.

The College of Physicians and Surgeons is the authority, should be the authority, and I respect the authority of the College of Physicians and Surgeons to determine who is fit to practise in the province of Ontario. I will not interfere with that, no matter how many times the member opposite asks me to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Frank Klees: It goes back to April of 2011, when we first raised questions about Dr. Mazza and Ornge in this House. She told us at that time that she has confidence in the steady hand and the very competence of the board of directors. As the minister pleaded at that time, she has no authority to intervene.

And so under her watch, multi millions of dollars were wasted. Patients and front-line staff were put at risk.

Ten months later: criminal investigations. Ten months later she fired him. Ten months later she called him a liar. The minister and the Premier and her caucus may consider the defence of Dr. Mazza worthy of a standing ovation. We happen to feel it's a disgrace and an abdication of responsibility.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Stormont, come to order.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I've taken full responsibility for getting Ornge back on track, and the member opposite knows that. Ornge is now well into a new chapter. It has new leadership. It has a new volunteer board of directors that is delivering results for the patients of this province. They measure how well they are doing, and I'm sure the member opposite would like to know how they're doing.

The most recent report on Ornge: Pilots were available to respond to calls 97% of the time; Ornge aircraft were in service 99% of the time; Ornge paramedics were available to respond 95% of the time; 96% of Ornge's patient transports between health facilities are confirmed within 20 minutes; and 90% of Ornge's patient transports from emergency scenes are confirmed within 10 minutes.

Speaker, Ornge is back on the right track, and it's about time the member opposite recognized the tremendous progress and work of front-line staff at Ornge.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question this morning is to the Minister of Finance. Under the McGuinty-Wynne

government, Ontario has lost 300,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs. That is 300,000 Ontario families who don't know where their next paycheque is going to come from and 300,000 men and women who are looking to the province for help and assistance.

Minister, under our Paths to Prosperity series of white papers, Tim Hudak and the Ontario PCs have put forward hundreds of ideas to help create jobs and grow Ontario's economy.

My question this morning, Minister, is a simple one: Where is your jobs plan for the province of Ontario?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let's correct some of the numbers here. Since this party came into government, we've had over 680,000 new jobs created. Since the depth of the recession, not only have the jobs that have been lost been recovered, but 470,000 more new jobs—net new jobs—have occurred.

It is occurring because of investments that we're making to stimulate economic growth by investing in our people and our skills, by ensuring that we strategically invest in infrastructure and projects that that party neglected all the while they were there, and ensuring that we make a dynamic business climate by maintaining our taxes low. We are doing everything possible, and every decision we make is about creating those jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the Minister of Finance: Minister, you need to get out of Queen's Park and back to reality. The Heinz plant in Leamington is just another example of your careless approach to Ontario's manufacturing sector, but sadly, Minister, it will not be the last. In fact, as Ontario has been losing out, we have seen US states like Michigan, Texas and Indiana creating thousands of new manufacturing jobs with cheaper energy, less red tape and, importantly, modernized labour laws.

It is clear that your government does not have a jobs plan, and because of that Ontario's middle class is being completely gutted under your watch.

Minister, when will Ontario move forward, remove unnecessary barriers to job creation and modernize our labour laws like Europe, Australia, the UK and most of the United States have already done?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite just compared us to other jurisdictions around the world that are falling behind Ontario in job creation. We have over 173% of jobs returned to this province compared to only 80% in the United States, and well above OECD countries. In fact, in Ontario, because of our direction into new manufacturing and advanced manufacturing in new sectors of the economy that are going to be necessary for us to be competitive in the future—they want to take us back to areas where we can't compete. Yet Ericsson Canada has invested in more jobs in this province. Toyota, in Cambridge, has invested up to 400 jobs. Ford has invested 2,800 more jobs. GM has invested and secured 2,500 jobs for CAMI. We have Green Arc Tire Manufacturing in St. Marys—more jobs. We have more jobs in Brantford, in Brockville, in Arnprior and in

Wallaceburg, Ontario. Because of these investments, because of those incentives, companies are seeking—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the Minister of Finance. Minister, here are the facts: One million people are out of work in Ontario today; 300,000 net manufacturing jobs have been lost—nearly 40,000 of those since the Premier was coronated last spring. Our middle class has been gutted and we are seeing plants closing and major layoffs on a daily basis—1,000 people at Heinz, another 800 at Sears—while US states like Michigan and Indiana are growing and creating new manufacturing jobs at record numbers.

As you have blown this off as a mere transition, Minister, in fact only Tim Hudak and the PCs have put forward a plan to create jobs, grow our economy and modernize Ontario's labour laws. Finance Minister, will you finally admit that Ontario is in an economic free fall and that your government doesn't have a single plan to create jobs or grow Ontario's economy?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, again he's referencing other parts of the world and the United States that are lagging behind Ontario. We have exceeded our targets. We are not satisfied; we want to do more. That is why we've introduced the Supporting Small Businesses Act: to ensure that 90% of companies in Ontario will be more competitive and exempt from paying employee health tax. The opposition are stalling that very initiative to support small business and create jobs in Ontario. That party is looking at cutting those investments that we're trying to make to protect our future competitiveness. They want to slash and burn and hurt our economic recovery. We reject that option. We will continue to do what's necessary to create jobs, promote growth and ensure that we continue to stay ahead of the curve. We need to do more. We need everybody at their best. They want to divide Ontario. We won't stand for that.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Yesterday, the energy minister said that hydro price hikes were "a fact of life." Ontario families are paying the highest electricity bills in the country, and they've seen those bills double over the last decade. They have one question: Are higher hydro bills a fact of life or are they a fact of life under the Liberal government?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I think we should review some facts. The previous governments—Liberal, Progressive Conservative, NDP—had for 20 years an average increase of 3.5% in the rates. The current government, over a period of 10 years and through our 2010 long-term energy plan, see rate increases averaging 3.4% over a 20-year period.

What we can do is mitigate the rate increases, and we've already taken significant steps. We'll mitigate rate increases by deferring new nuclear. We'll take \$15 billion out of the rate base; the Samsung transaction,

taking \$3.7 billion out of the rate base; dispatching wind, taking \$200 million a year out of the rate base. We've already taken significant steps. The reality is that we are going to mitigate rate increases and we're going to keep them lower than they have been in the past, but—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Be seated, please. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: For families and businesses struggling to make ends meet, this is just the latest evidence of how arrogant and out of touch the Liberals have grown. The minister claims that these sky-high bills are just a fact of life.

1050

Well, let me ask this: The \$1 billion added to bills when Liberals cancelled gas plants, the \$180 million blown when Liberals committed to a nuclear expansion plan that never went ahead, the millions and millions and millions spent daily on private power deals and lavish compensation, all of the government's desperate wheeling and dealing—are these things all a fact of life?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: There are a couple of facts of life. We've moved the energy sector from an energy deficit to an energy surplus. We've moved it from dirty, cheap coal to a clean system.

Mr. Speaker, yes, rates have gone up because of significant investments that we have made in the sector to get it up to speed. That includes \$31 billion over the last 10 years, invested in generation and transmission.

I've just listed \$20 billion in rate mitigation measures that we have already taken in the last nine months. We're going to continue to do that. That's the policy under the new long-term energy plan, and we will be extremely successful in mitigating rate increases in the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, 10 years ago, Liberals were elected with the following promise to Ontarians: The government's "bungling of the hydro file ... will cost taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars and leave ... businesses coping with impossibly high hydro bills.

"We will ... ensure Ontario has a steady supply of ... affordable electricity."

Well, 10 long years later, the cost of hydro bills has doubled. Ontario households have some of the highest-cost hydro in the entire country. The government has added billions and billions to those bills by signing and cancelling contracts whenever it suited the political needs of their party.

Is this minister really so out of touch that he's just telling people to suck it up and pay the bill?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We have reduced the investment in health care by \$4 billion by moving to a clean energy system. We've taken \$4 billion out of the health care system.

But let's look at some of the other experiences. About a year ago, the Conservatives issued their white paper to privatize Ontario Power Generation. I want to read from the *Toronto Sun*—not the *Toronto Star*; the *Toronto Sun*. "Hudak should keep in mind the ... Tory government in

Ontario that tried to do that with electricity generation, promising it would lead to lower hydro rates.

"Instead, it led to the exact opposite—rates skyrocketed amid rampant Tory patronage, and the Conservatives, faced with rising public fury, abandoned the scheme...."

We have rectified the system; we have improved the system. Our decisions have been strategic. Moving forward, we're taking \$20 billion out of the rate base, and the rates will be mitigated.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Liberals have done nothing but follow the folly of the Conservatives on the hydro file.

My next question is actually to the Acting Premier. Over a year ago, the Liberals promised to bring in a hard cap on executive compensation in the public sector. Can the Acting Premier tell us whether the plan has changed?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I'll take the first question and I'll pass the supplementary.

I can tell you that managing public sector compensation is a very important part of our plan to control costs and to protect front-line government services that Ontario families rely on. We froze salaries for executives at hospitals, universities, colleges, school boards and provincially owned electricity companies. All aspects of compensation plans are frozen. Base salaries cannot be increased. In addition, the overall performance pay envelopes at designated employers are frozen. MPPs: I think it's important to note that we will also continue to see our wages frozen, five years in a row.

Is there more to do? Yes, there is, and I look forward to the supplementary, when the minister can reply.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Gee, Speaker, I'm surprised the Minister of Health could deliver that response with a straight face.

Today, the House will vote on a bill to cap public sector CEOs' salaries at twice the level of the Premier's. We've seen the government offering vague promises about taking some action on this file, but as usual, we haven't seen any action. Will the Liberals actually take action today and vote to cap public sector CEO salaries?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Minister of Government Services.

Hon. John Milloy: This is not about vague promises; this is about our commitment in the 2013 budget, which that member and her party supported. The 2013 budget was clear that we are committed as a government to examining additional measures to manage compensation costs, including considering hard caps. That examination is under way, and the results will be announced forthwith.

But, you know, Mr. Speaker, the member represents her bill, and it was very interesting, when you reviewed her press conference yesterday, that she referenced a particularly high salary, and when the members of the

press pressed her on it, she said, "Oh, well, we'd have an exemption for it."

You can't have it both ways. This is a complex matter, and the bill that she has put forward does not take into account the many, many nuances that need to be dealt with in a policy that comes forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The average household income in Ontario is a little over \$70,000. They're paying the highest electricity bills in the country, the highest auto insurance premiums in the country, and they are scrambling to pay for caring for their aging loved ones. They're the ones who pay the bills to make Ontario work, and when they see public sector executives like the CEO of Hydro One get a raise of \$70,000 a year—more than their entire household will earn in that year—they feel like their government just isn't getting it.

Does the Acting Premier think that the CEO pay hikes are the best investment of public dollars, and if not, why the heck are they not doing anything about it?

Hon. John Milloy: The honourable member cannot take yes for an answer. The simple fact is, in the 2013 budget, which her party allowed to pass, we made a commitment to examine it. But this is a complex issue. Again, I remind her of her press conference yesterday. She mentioned, I believe, an OPG official who was paid an exorbitant amount, and someone pointed out that that person had special technical skills. So do you know what the leader of the third party said? "Oh, we'll have an exemption for him."

I mean, come on. You come forward with a simple solution to a very complex problem, which does not work, and you have to swallow yourself whole in front of a press conference.

We need a considered response. That is the work that we're doing, and we will follow up on our commitment made in the 2013 budget that her party allowed to pass.

POLICE

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Minister, in May 2012, you announced that you had ordered your ministry to review how police officers across the province respond to calls involving those with suspected mental illness. This was following three fatal shootings in the province of Ontario.

In an interview, you stated that "we need to take a step back and see what we are doing and what is done elsewhere, and to come out with recommendations." Well, Minister, members on this side of the House haven't seen any indication of any investigation. Could you please give us a report on the status of this investigation today?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'm pleased to answer this question. To deal with individuals who are suffering from mental illness, from the side of the police, is not an easy matter. Most of the time, when they have a call, they don't know who is in front of them. That's why I have

asked my ministry to work with the police force in Ontario and see what is the best practice that we have in Ontario to deal with people with mental illness and also to look at what is being done elsewhere, in Canada and in the world.

Each police force across the world is dealing with such a very important issue, and we are all sharing our experiences to put forward the best approach.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Well, I think it's pretty clear from that answer that pretty much nothing has happened since May 2012, and the need is becoming even more and more urgent. You announced the need for the review following the deaths of Reyal Jardine-Douglas, Sylvia Klibingaitis and Michael Eligon. These individuals all suffered from a mental illness and were killed in a police standoff. Since then, there has been another death with the shooting of Sammy Yatim in July of this year.

1100

Minister, we need to prevent further deaths like this from happening. Will you stand in your place now and tell us exactly what you're prepared to do to make sure that deaths like this don't ever happen again?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: According to the member who asked the question, there is nothing that has been done. I'll say that there is a lot more that has been done than when her party was in power, because there was nothing that was done.

I take mental illness and addiction very seriously. Again, that's why I asked my ministry to launch a review into how police interact with the mentally ill last year. We have completed the first stage, a large step, of the review. We have analyzed what was done in the past 25 years and the report from the coroner. We have identified, like I said, best practices across the country, the USA, the UK and Australia. We have reviewed existing guidelines and models adopted by police services in Ontario. We have reviewed leading academic research. We are currently working on the next step, and we will continue until we have the right solution.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Minister of Rural Affairs. Yesterday I had the opportunity to meet Walter Pallichuk, a Heinz grower in Leamington. Some of the members on the other side of the House might remember Walter. He's the head of Drip Irrigation Inc., and they were awarded a Premier's award of excellence for their work on irrigating tomatoes. But as of November 14, Walter can no longer grow tomatoes, and the current business risk management programs do not cover disappearance of a market like what has happened with the Heinz closure.

Not only are 740 people at the Heinz plant losing their jobs, but farmers have lost their markets for tomatoes, and they don't know where to turn next. Will you work with the growers to create an emergency transition program and a long-term plan for the industry in Leamington?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, as you well know and the member knows, the Premier, in her role as Minister of Agriculture and Food, and the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment were in Leamington last Friday. They had extensive consultations with all the players involved in that. Everyone in this House is disappointed with the Heinz decision, but there was an interesting program on The Agenda last Monday evening with a professor from the University of Guelph. He went through the whole Heinz decision from A to Z. I recommend all members of the House take the opportunity to look at that program. We know today from media reports from Leamington, Ontario, that there's a number of entities that are looking at opportunities in Leamington to work with the tomato growers to make sure that they have a future in that fine community of Leamington.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, back to the Minister of Rural Affairs: The Heinz growers had a three-year commitment from the company to buy their tomatoes, and they invested in their crop this fall based on that commitment. Their market has disappeared. The Risk Management Program doesn't work, and even if another entity steps up, it doesn't help them for this year's crop because it's unlikely that that will get all put together in time for this.

So, Minister, will you step up to the plate and stand up for the producers with those contracts that have disappeared and work with them to actually make sure that they can go to the bank and go to FCC and say, "Yes, we are solvent and we are still in place"?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to reiterate that the Premier, in her role as Minister of Agriculture and Food, and the Minister of Economic Development and Trade were in Leamington last Friday. They had an extensive and comprehensive round table with all the producers, the people and the economic development officers in that area. We have staff from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food on the ground right now looking for a prospective opportunity or for a new entity to continue the manufacturing of tomato-based products in that community. We're looking forward to a continuing co-operation of work with all the players in that community.

Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker: I met with a number of agriculture commodity groups this morning. They say the Risk Management Program is one of the most successful programs for agriculture in the province of Ontario.

SPORTS AND RECREATION FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: This question is to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Ontario supports sport and recreation in our province, providing assistance to amateur and high-performance athletes alike. That's what it has always taken if a community, a province and a country seek to develop Olympians, professionals and international stars in sports.

Ontario needs to continue as a leader, supporting athletes at the grassroots level. We need to start early, get-

ting children interested in sports to develop as individuals and to stay physically and mentally fit. Community centres, sports associations and other programs help shape future Ontario sports role models.

Minister, how does Ontario promote and support youth to become involved in sport, fitness and recreation?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member from Mississauga–Streetsville. This Saturday, November 30, is national sports day. It is our country's celebration of sport. From grassroots to high performance, it is an opportunity for all Canadians to celebrate the power of sport and to build community and national morale, and facilitate healthy, active living.

Local organizations, communities and schools from coast to coast will open their doors to celebrate sport at the local level with events. That includes festivals, try-it days, open houses and pep rallies that celebrate sport at all levels.

Since 2003, our government has invested over \$752 million to support sport and recreation programs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Minister, support for fitness and recreation means everyone has to pitch in. Municipalities can't do it all alone, operating on just the property tax base and through program fees. Community sponsors also need to know they're part of a team.

In my youth, I was a hockey player and a swimmer, and governments then invested the funds to build indoor arenas and pools. We developed our best swimmers, divers, water polo players and synchronized swimmers because our elected leaders had the foresight to build facilities athletes needed to develop and compete. Award winners or not, kids developed a strong body and a solid work ethic. Being able to compete as young athletes made us better people as adults later in life.

Minister, what is Ontario doing to give today's kids the same chance to develop and compete as past generations of kids had?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you, again, for the question. Participating in sport and recreation is vital to the health and well-being of all Ontarians. Our government recognizes the importance of Ontarians being active in sport and recreation. We want our province to be a healthy, prosperous place to live, to work and to play.

In 2012-13, we provided over \$23 million to our sport partners to promote participation and excellence in sport across Ontario, including almost \$10 million for the Quest for Gold program, over \$7.5 million to support provincial sport and multi-sport organizations and almost \$4 million for our key service delivery partners.

Through our investments, we are helping our athletes reach the highest levels of competition and promoting vibrant and healthy communities across Ontario.

DEER HUNT

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Thursday last, I informed the

House of a controversial four-day deer cull in Short Hills Provincial Park, which took place from November 21 to November 24, and which will occur again from today until December 1.

Hunters are allowed into this very small 6.6-square-kilometre provincial park. As I stated, there have been serious safety questions arise because of the small nature of the park and the fact that there are nearly 100 homes located in close proximity.

As you know, many residents of the area have serious concerns over public safety, and, Minister, as reported, this year's hunt was no different. There were again incidents involving public safety. In fact, your own ministry is investigating them at this time.

Minister, how is the MNR ensuring public safety during the deer cull in the Short Hills Provincial Park?

Hon. David Orazietti: I'm pleased to respond to the question. As the member knows full well, the result of the hunt is part of the Haudenosaunee First Nations exercising what their traditional treaty rights are from the Nanfan Treaty, which was signed in 1701. So Ontario has an obligation to uphold their treaty rights in allowing the hunt to proceed.

1110

The Ministry of Natural Resources does have staff on-site. They are patrolling the site. It's a 660-hectare park. The Niagara Regional Police Service and the OPP are there, as well, to ensure safety.

The six days that have been specified are days in which there is very low visitation to the park.

So we are obviously ensuring safety. It would be irresponsible of the provincial government to not participate in helping to ensure the safety of these activities, given that we are obligated to uphold federal treaty rights.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Minister, your staff say that the basis of the cull is an attempt to manage and control the overpopulation of deer in the park. Last year, there were only seven deer harvested during the cull, and it was reported that last Saturday, again, only seven deer were taken.

Minister, not only did the Short Hills hunt fail to meet your objective, but in not allowing a managed, open hunt to all through a lottery or draw, the MNR is missing an opportunity to increase revenues to the SPCA.

Minister, if you're going to continue to control the Short Hills deer population, are you considering allowing a managed hunt consistent with your deer management strategy in the rest of the province, where it is necessary to bring populations into balance and protect habitat?

Hon. David Orazietti: Speaker, I'm somewhat confused about the member's question with respect to safety. First, the member is talking about ensuring safety and the cost of safety and who's there to help ensure this is safe. Then in the same question, in the supplementary, the member is saying we should broaden the hunt, perhaps, and have more hunters in there shooting deer. So I'm a bit concerned about that.

This is about the treaty rights for the Haudenosaunee First Nations, and we are being responsible in providing appropriate safety. Twenty-one deer have been harvested to date, and we obviously expect that more will take place in the coming three days of the remainder of the hunt.

I have to assure the member that safety is the top priority. I would also indicate that I have responded to folks publicly, through an open letter. They should also be expressing concerns in the area to their federal members, Malcolm Allen, Dean Allison and Rick Dykstra, who are responsible for overseeing the federal treaties that are reached with First Nations in the province of Ontario.

The province is doing everything it can to ensure that safety is first and foremost.

I also want to say that the Minister of the Environment, Jim Bradley—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Under this government's watch, electricity prices have doubled in this province. One of the casualties of the doubling of these prices is the curling club in my hometown of Welland. The government said this morning that participating in sports and recreation is vital, but Frank Belchior, president of the Welland Curling Club, said because of high electricity prices, his club is in danger of closing. They are now paying close to \$7,000 a month during the season on hydro alone.

How does this government justify doubling the hydro prices and the pain it's causing for the residents in my hometown of Welland and across this province?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, we have rebuilt the system. We've invested \$31 billion. That puts pressure on prices, pushing them up. We are now in a surplus situation, and we're now reducing the amount of investments that are going into the rate base, which will mitigate them in the future.

In the meantime, we've created a number of programs to be of assistance to people in the interim period. That includes the Industrial Conservation Initiative, the Industrial Electricity Incentive program, the Northern Industrial Electricity Rate Program, and the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit, which also assists farmers and small business people. I would be happy to sit down with the member and review the bill she's referring to, to see whether or not there are price mitigations in any of these programs that could be of assistance to her constituent.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Minister, recreational facilities such as the Welland Curling Club are at the heart of the social activity in small-town Ontario. If clubs like this one are being hurt because of skyrocketing electricity prices, it means that other community centres like arenas and other sports complexes across the province are also being slammed.

How does this government justify the doubling of electricity prices under its watch, the harm it's doing to communities, and what is it going to do to actually help these entities in our communities across this province?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, we have a long-term energy plan which was initiated in 2010, which projected average increases over a 20-year period of 3.4%. As I mentioned earlier, because of the investments that were necessary in the system to get a clean system and eliminate dirty coal, it put pressures on the system.

In the meantime, we've created a number of price mitigation programs to help the people across Ontario, including a 10% discount, which is the Clean Energy Benefit. We have also taken strong steps in the last nine months to reduce price increases in the future, and that includes \$20 billion taken out of the rate base, which will mitigate prices in the future.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Joe Dickson: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Yesterday, the minister announced that the Ministry of Energy will be releasing the 2013 long-term energy plan this coming Monday. When it comes to the electricity system in Ontario, one of the things I hear most often about from my constituents in Ajax, Pickering and Durham is that they want to know more about their energy bills, the environment and the overall energy system.

As our electricity system has been modernized with the advent of smart meters, smart grids, energy apps and time-of-use pricing, it is important for Ontarians to know why and how they use these tools. Can the minister please tell us what steps the government is taking to increase energy literacy?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I want to thank the member for his question. As I mentioned yesterday in the House, promoting energy literacy among Ontarians is a top priority for the Ministry of Energy. In keeping with this theme, yesterday we launched a new Web portal dedicated to educating Ontarians about their electricity system.

The website, called emPOWERme, provides an excellent overview of Ontario's energy sector and explains how generation, transmission and distribution networks function together to ensure that everybody has access to the clean and reliable electricity they need. The emPOWERme website is accessible to Ontarians of all ages, and I would highly recommend that members encourage their constituents to take advantage of this resource.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Joe Dickson: The emPOWERme website sounds like something that many of my constituents would definitely find very, very useful. All of us in the House today should agree that we need to continue to do more to promote energy literacy in Ontario. In fact, the need to do so was identified by consumers directly, through a number of recent reports, including the Drummond report, the Auditor General's 2011 report and the

Environmental Commissioner's 2011 and 2012 annual reports.

Constituents in Ajax, Pickering and Durham would like to understand how the system works and know the ways that they can reduce their energy consumption, which would help them save on their hydro bills—and all of their energy bills—and help the environment. Can the minister please tell us if the upcoming long-term energy plan might include more tools to allow more Ontarians to become more energy-literate?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I agree with the member that we can do a better job of informing Ontarians about the state of our electricity system. In fact, we heard this throughout the summer when we visited several ridings in the province to gather input from Ontarians on the long-term energy plan.

The website offers a number of video shorts that explain electricity generation, distribution, transmission and conservation. The site also includes an interactive electricity bill tutorial, info graphics and interactive exhibits about Ontario's supply mix and smart grid innovations. Encouraging a better understanding of the energy system and empowering consumers is a theme that will be reflected in the long-term energy plan.

There are videos on that site that are very, very simple and that explain how the system operates, and explain to individuals how they can benefit from it, including how they can lower their hydro bills.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Minister, the Premier's words of support for local food ring hollow when I see how you let the Municipal Property Assessment Corp. treat Ontario's local food producers, people like Nigel Smith in my riding, who makes fantastic cheese at Bushgarden Farmstead Cheese in Rideau Lakes township. MPAC is turning this amazing artisan cheesemaker's experience sour.

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One of the first visitors to Nigel's farm wasn't a customer; it was the MPAC taxman, who slapped him with an "industrial" classification. "Industrial" is the opposite of what happens here, yet this ridiculous decision cost Nigel an additional \$1,200 on his property tax bill.

Minister, will you have a conversation with MPAC and explain to them the difference between "artisanal" and "industrial"?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question; I really do. We are looking at MPAC now; we're having a review. The parliamentary assistant to the Ministry of Finance is doing an outstanding job, alongside the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, on ensuring that we have a competitive environment. We want to make certain that our companies succeed, especially our entrepreneurs, who are the creator of many jobs.

So I welcome the question. We will endeavour to review exactly what is occurring over there. As I said, a review is certainly under way around MPAC all around the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the minister: You know, Minister, if you want local food, you can't send the tax-man in to hassle them.

Nigel Smith spent three and a half years cutting through your red tape, to make world-class cheese, and MPAC jeopardized his operation with just one visit to the farm.

I'm also going to tell you about Terry and Dave McGurrin, from Edgewood Farms, who, for the first time in 12 years, kept their pancake house closed. They gave it up because MPAC demanded that they pay a commercial assessment for a six-week operation. Shutting them down wasn't enough. MPAC then came and hassled them—essentially interrogated Terry—about displaying maple syrup and owning a cash register or even part of a pancake griddle. It was absolutely disgusting.

How many more farm businesses will MPAC shut down before you and the Premier do your job?

Hon. Charles Sousa: A report has just come out today, reaffirming how Ontario is much more competitive than most jurisdictions in the OECD and in North America around its tax regime. We took initiatives to introduce the HST, to enable those companies to be even more competitive, which the opposition opposed.

More importantly, the member is asking a question about finding ways to make taxes more affordable for businesses and entrepreneurs. He should stand up and support the Supporting Small Businesses Act. That is what we're doing to exempt these very companies from paying those taxes, and they're holding it up.

Mr. Speaker, I'll endeavour to look at what he has proposed and what's happening. I would be happy to do that. More importantly, I wish he would stand up for those small businesses by supporting them with this act.

THUNDER BAY GENERATING STATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Minister of Energy. The people of Thunder Bay are telling this government that a biomass peaking plant won't cut it when it comes to meeting the demands for energy for the future mining projects in the northwest.

The Premier told NOMA, the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, that she hears their concerns, but the Minister of Energy stood in this Legislature yesterday and said he prefers to take advice from government bureaucrats in Toronto.

So just who is calling the shots when it comes to making decisions about power for northwestern Ontario?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I would suggest that the people of Thunder Bay are calling the shots on this particular issue. We've had extensive consultations with them, with the task force that was set up and the committee.

The chair of the task force has indicated that he's pleased that we're converting the Thunder Bay station to biomass. He did raise some questions about the supply of the material. We discussed alternatives, how that could be addressed, and that issue will be addressed.

Thunder Bay will have the energy it needs when they need it. The whole northwest, under the plan that the OPA has rolled out, will have over \$2.5 billion invested in transmission, in generation. It's a great plan. A lot of research went into it—tremendous consultation with the aboriginal communities and the people in the area.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know why she's hammering this. Obviously, it's for political reasons. There is no issue of reliability for the electricity in Thunder—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Yesterday, the Minister of Energy waved off legitimate concerns raised by the Common Voice Northwest Energy Task Force by saying, "They will not have to worry about their energy generation."

Thunder Bay has heard that line from Liberals before. After two previous power plant cancellations that cost the public \$20 million, you'll forgive northerners if they don't take this government at its word.

When will the minister take the advice of northwesterners on electricity for a change?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The leader of the third party has no evidence for what she is saying. The evidence is that Thunder Bay will have a reliable system of electricity and reliable generation. The Atikokan plant, the Thunder Bay plant will be more than enough to meet the needs of Thunder Bay.

I would like the leader of the third party to come with some evidence for her stand and position. She has no technical evidence. She has no experiential evidence in any way, shape or form. It's all anecdotal.

The system in Thunder Bay is reliable. They'll have electricity when they need it. They'll have much more transmission than they have now in the very near future.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. Aboriginal youth are Canada's fastest growing demographic and also the fastest-growing potential workforce. Almost half of aboriginal peoples in Canada—First Nations, Inuit and Métis—are less than 24 years old. We know there exists a gap between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people, both in terms of educational outcomes and income.

We know that the success of aboriginal people in Ontario is essential to the success of all Ontarians. We also know that in Ontario, we're working together to build a successful, vital province where everyone has the opportunity to connect, contribute and achieve their goals. Only in this way can Ontario be the fair and just society it aspires to be.

Can the minister inform the House of what Ontario is doing to narrow this gap?

Hon. David Zimmer: Speaker, on November 18, I represented Ontario at the Aboriginal Affairs Working Group in Winnipeg. As a recent national chair of the Aboriginal Affairs Working Group for the past number

of years, our government has supported the continued call for a first ministers' meeting on aboriginal education with aboriginal leaders. We have been urging the federal government to work with us and the aboriginal leadership to close the gap on these issues. It is really important—I can't stress that enough—for the federal government and all of the provincial and territorial aboriginal organization leaders to be at the same table to find the solutions to these important issues.

At the working group, the provincial-territorial ministers and the national aboriginal organization leaders discussed a range of opportunities to reduce barriers to education and increase opportunities. I also worked with my colleagues in recommending that the federal minister have more dialogue with his provincial counterparts on these issues.

We look forward to working with the federal government on these issues. We need the federal government—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: It's good to know that Ontario is showing leadership in the effort to advance these important issues.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that another priority of the working group is to end violence against aboriginal women and girls. About 50% of aboriginal women in Canada who have had a spouse or common-law partner in the last five years reported being a victim of spousal violence, more than twice the proportion among non-aboriginal women. Missing and murdered aboriginal women represent about 10% of the homicides in Canada, despite the fact that aboriginal women make up only 3% of the total female population.

I know that earlier this year, Premier Wynne joined her provincial counterparts at the Council of the Federation in supporting the call on the federal government from the national aboriginal leadership for an inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women. Mr. Speaker, through you, can the minister update this House on how the Aboriginal Affairs Working Group is addressing this issue?

Hon. David Zimmer: Speaker, again, this issue of missing and murdered aboriginal women is huge across the country. Again, at the Winnipeg conference—I was there last year and I was there just recently—all of the provincial ministers and all of the national aboriginal leadership team called on the federal government to launch an inquiry into missing aboriginal women. The federal government has not taken up that challenge, has not taken up that initiative.

We continue to press the federal government. The national aboriginal leadership continues to press the federal government. The national aboriginal women's leadership groups continue to press for this call. But so far, we haven't even had a nibble on this issue.

Last year when I was in Winnipeg, the federal government didn't attend. This year, the federal government attended for a part of the morning to discuss this issue and then went off to other duties. This is an important issue. We need the federal government at the table.

1130

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, two days ago, in response to our leader's question about the Niagara south hospital project, you suggested I ask you a question about a hospital build in my riding. Firstly, Minister, thank you for the offer. After 10 years, the Markdale community no doubt appreciates your offer to answer our long-standing question about the construction date for the new hospital.

Secondly, I kindly remind you that your government did challenge Markdale to raise \$12 million for the new facility, which they did, and then you provided \$4 million in planning funding and erected a sign on the site advising that a new hospital was forthcoming.

So, Minister, please tell us, what is the intended construction date for the new Markdale hospital?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I tell you, this is really getting exciting here, because the party that was opposed to building new hospitals, the party that voted against building new hospitals, has now decided that building new hospitals should, in fact, be a priority.

Interjection: They've seen the light.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: They have seen the light, and it is a very happy day, I have to say, for the patients of Ontario.

The member opposite knows that we are in very active conversations with Grey Bruce Health Services. I had a meeting personally in my own office with leadership from that organization. We acknowledge that the people of Markdale actually need enhanced health care. We are working hard to make that become a reality, and it's wonderful to have the support of the party opposite.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Speaker, again to the minister. Well, Minister, thank you so much, but you know what? Conversations don't provide health care.

With all due respect, Minister, you encouraged me to ask you about the Markdale hospital project. If you're not prepared to talk about the new Markdale hospital, then you need to tell the hospital staff, the patients, the donors and the volunteers what they should do with the sign that you erected on their site in celebration of the new build announced over 10 years ago. As well, you need to assure the people of Markdale, and the Niagara region as well, that you won't compromise their health care and that finding money for their hospital projects is just as important as finding money to cancel gas plants.

Minister, will you do the honourable thing? Restore faith in elected officials by honouring the commitment made by your Liberal government to the people of Markdale and build the Markdale hospital.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

Be seated, please. Be seated. Thank you.
Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think that the member opposite should talk to some of his colleagues who have been blessed with new hospitals in their ridings, and who will know that there is a process. I'm sure the member from Simcoe North could talk about Waypoint; the member from Barrie could talk about the Royal Victoria; the member from Cambridge could talk about Cambridge hospital; the member from Burlington—even though she voted against it, we're going ahead with the Joe Brant memorial hospital expansion; the member from Halton could talk to you about the Milton district; the member from Leeds–Grenville could talk about Brockville mental health; the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London would be more than happy to talk about St. Thomas Elgin; the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke would happily talk about the dialysis at Renfrew Victoria Hospital; and the member from Wellington–Halton Hills I know would be more than happy to talk about the Groves Memorial Community Hospital expansion.

Speaker, we have an impressive and proven history of building the hospital infrastructure our patients need, and I'm delighted to have the support now—a change of heart—of the Conservative Party.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Acting Premier. Recently, I received a letter from the regional government. They will be asking this government to improve rail services to Kitchener–Waterloo again. In 2011, with much fanfare, this government announced that GO train service was coming to Kitchener–Waterloo. Constituents in my riding were promised rail service to Toronto that works for them. They were told that service would start with four trips in the morning and four trips in the afternoon. Eventually, two-way all-day service would connect Kitchener–Waterloo to Toronto. Yet people are only getting half of what they were promised, and two-way all-day service won't happen for at least another 15 years.

Speaker, my constituents need transportation options that allow them to get to work. When will this government follow through on its promises and provide the rail service that the region of Waterloo needs?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, I can tell you that the member from Kitchener Centre has been a passionate and strong advocate of enhanced transit from Kitchener to Toronto, and he has done an excellent job. As the member from Kitchener Centre said, we've done so well that people want more of what we're doing, and Speaker, I can tell you that we will continue to improve transit in this province.

We are committed to getting people out of cars and onto public transit. Since 2003, we've invested more than \$16.1 billion in public transit, and that's more than \$7.7 billion to GO Transit. Our commitment is very clear: We're committed to public transit, and we will continue to make sure that we get as many people out of cars and into public transit as possible.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Constituents and businesses in my riding are looking for more than empty words. Rather than wait for this government to live up to its promises, tech companies are taking matters into their own hands. Google, BlackBerry, OpenText, all of these companies have been forced to provide shuttle services to their employees in the region. At a recent CityAge conference, leaders of the 800 tech companies that employ 30,000 people in Kitchener–Waterloo repeatedly stressed the importance of rail service to the region.

When will this government include the rest of the province in its transit plans?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think we have found common ground, because our commitment is exactly to public transit that the member opposite is asking for. We know it's important, and we know that the Waterloo region is one of the largest and fastest-growing urban regions in Ontario. That's why we've committed up to \$300 million to support rapid transit in Waterloo region, and this project will connect the cities of Kitchener, Waterloo and Cambridge, while linking up with GO Transit services.

And, Speaker, more good news: The federal government has joined the province, and it has committed up to \$265 million. This is the single largest transit infrastructure investment in the region's history. In total, we've committed more than \$400 million to public transit to Waterloo region since 2003. This is great news, and we're moving forward together.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Leeds–Grenville has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm waiting for quiet.

—given by the Minister of Finance concerning MPAC and regulations against local food production. This matter will be debated Tuesday at 6 p.m.

The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs on a point of order.

VISITORS

Hon. David Zimmer: Speaker, I would like to introduce Adela Wan, who's a policy adviser over at the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, who is here. But here's why she's in the Legislature today: Because when the United Way did its fundraising campaign at the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, she bid about \$100 to come and visit question period and then have lunch with the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. So welcome.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I ask all the members in the House today to join me in welcoming a good friend of mine—I call him brother, although he is a little bit older than me—Mr. Harbhajan Singh Dhillon.

Mr. John O'Toole: I would like to recognize teacher Nancy Deratnay, who is a grade 5 teacher at Charles Bowman Public School in Bowmanville.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to welcome Rosemary Sadlier, author, and president of the Ontario Black History Society. Welcome.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I take the liberty of introducing Ajax councillor Joanne Dies, who is in the audience on the far side this morning with a number of other residents who are working to protect our Ajax waterfront and improve the water quality and livability in that area.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Again, maybe it's my problem, but I remind members that we've set aside time for doing introductions, and it's very difficult to try to allow for this to happen if we're not going to stay with the procedure. So I remind you, please, if you know they're coming and they're not here, introduce them during that time period. It will still show up on the record, and it shows that you cared about their visit. I appreciate your co-operation on that issue.

There are no deferred votes. This House will stand recessed until this afternoon at 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1140 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I would like to welcome the members from Oxford People Against the Landfill to the Legislature today. They're here today to see their petition presented, and hopefully I'll get that opportunity when we get to the petitions. They're Karen Paton-Evans, Steve McSwiggan, Bryan Smith and Suzanne Crellin. I would like to thank them for their hard work on the petition and welcome them to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I try to recognize you as long as you don't make a speech while you're doing introductions, but that's fine.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

EVERTZ MICROSYSTEMS

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Alan Lambshead is a resident of my riding of Burlington. Alan spent his career at an advanced manufacturing firm, Evertz Microsystems, a global leader in audio-video equipment for the television and film industry.

Evertz is also located in my riding, with offices located internationally, in the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Croatia, Hong Kong, India and the United Arab Emirates.

As part of its high-technology work, Evertz made a contribution to the democratic life of this province 30 years ago. On April 2, 1983, its digital timers went live here in the Legislature. The simplicity of their appearance conceals a sophisticated array of options that allows the Speaker and Clerk to judge remaining time as well as

control the ringing of the bells. Considered outrageous by some members 30 years ago, with the passage of time, these clocks have become a part of the history of this place, Speaker. It is now impossible to imagine the Legislative Assembly functioning without them.

I am honoured to represent the community of Burlington and proud that my riding has played a small but measurable role in the ongoing debate about the values, priorities and future of this great province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Your time is up. *[Inaudible]* to the clock.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Miss Monique Taylor: I'll just use the end of her time by saying: That was a great statement. The reason why statements are so great in this House is, we get to hear the history of things that have happened before us. So, good job.

I hope that doesn't get taken off my time, Speaker.

I would like to thank my leader, Andrea Horwath, for appointing me, along with my colleague the member for Parkdale-High Park, to sit on the Select Committee on Developmental Services. Thus far, the members of the committee have left their political stripes at the door as we discuss the crisis in this sector, and I want to thank the members for that.

To date, we have heard from 10 different government ministries, which itself speaks to the complexity of the problems faced by those in the developmental sector. We have also heard from OPSEU, CUPE and Community Living. Yesterday, we heard from CAMH and former residents of the Huronia Regional Centre. I want to thank those who have submitted and presented so far, and I look forward to future presentations.

But we're just getting started. We will hear from others in Toronto and as we travel the province in the new year. I hope to hear from as many families and individuals as possible, people who need the services in this sector. We need to hear those stories. We know there are serious challenges, and we need to understand and fully know how to find solutions for these most vulnerable Ontarians.

There are still spots available, and I encourage those with a direct stake in our committee's recommendations to contact the Clerk of the committee to allow us to hear your story.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The clock is indicating you're finished.

MISSISSAUGA SANTA CLAUS PARADE

Mr. Bob Delaney: The productivity improvements and quality circles among the elves at the North Pole toy factory allowed Santa Claus a break to take the sleigh out for a pre-Christmas spin at the 2013 Streetsville Santa Claus parade last Sunday. Organized by the Streetsville Business Improvement Association and sponsored by

Enersource, the famous Streetsville Santa Claus parade wound its way from the corner of Britannia and Queen through the heart of historic Streetsville before ending at Station Road.

The Toys for Tots campaign benefited some 6,000 local needy kids. The police and other pipe bands were out in force in a kilometre-long parade where everyone bundled up against the cold and the biting wind. Families from Lisgar, Meadowvale and Streetsville, and from all over Mississauga and the surrounding areas, came to see Santa's new 2013-model sleigh, equipped to haul this year's latest toys, games and other gifts.

Our big, furry cat, Obi-Wan, made his eighth consecutive parade appearance, driving with me and Andrea in our decorated golf cart. Obi-Wan's many fans waved to him all along the parade route, and he always waves back.

Merry Christmas, Mississauga, and all the very best for 2014.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Rod Jackson: Over the past few weeks, we've seen the Liberal government vehemently defend its \$1.4-billion budget for the Pan/Parapan Am Games. Only under pressure to come clean, they recently boosted the budget to almost \$2.56 billion. Despite their ballooning revisionist budget, which doesn't even include the final transportation or security numbers, top executive salaries will still be padded by 100% just for showing up for work, and—get this—another 100% reward for just being on budget.

Logic would follow that these bonuses will be cut in half for the announcement of the new Pan Am spending. We need to defend public money and not have these executives receiving any bonus at all for doing the bare minimum, never mind the already-noted failure to perform.

Another issue I'd like to flag today is the apparent lip service given to the Parapan Am Games. This government has happily touted all sorts of legacies resulting from the games, yet what was missing was a clear commitment to the legacy of accessibility of the games for the Parapan athletes and the fans. I'm not sure if that is because there isn't a plan for the legacy of accessibility or if this is just another hidden cost somewhere on another set of books.

What's amply clear is that this government has no control of this file. No amount of money will mitigate this lack of management, no matter how hard they try. It's time for real leadership for the sake of all the hard-working Ontario families that are financing these games.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. John Vanthof: Recently, this Legislature passed a Local Food Act. It was unanimously supported by all parties, and I'm sure that all parties will try to lever some benefit out of it at some point in the electoral process.

But the mechanics of the act are vague. Just how vague became apparent in my visit to Leamington. The

pending closure of the Heinz plant made that abundantly clear. There is nothing more Ontario and more local than Heinz products, especially the ketchup, but the fate of the origin of those products now rests on the board tables of multinational companies.

That's a reality, and we have to put in place in this province conditions that can make our food production competitive, but that's only part of the solution. We also have to make sure that the inherent knowledge of farmers is protected, because as companies make decisions, farmers and the people who supply the farmers are often left wondering what the next move is. In the case of tomato farmers or in the case of dairy farmers, you just can't recreate that knowledge. We should have an Ontario food strategy that also protects the inherent knowledge of agriculture, because you can't just read that in a book.

SEAS CENTRE

Ms. Soo Wong: Last weekend, I had the privilege of attending the 27th anniversary of the Support Enhance Access Service Centre, better known as the SEAS Centre. SEAS helps members of my community by promoting personal well-being, enhancing family harmony and encouraging community involvement. Today, SEAS and other local leaders are working together to build a welcoming community that supports the integration of newcomers into Canadian life.

1310

It was 27 years ago that SEAS was created to address the needs of newcomers, mostly centred around the Regent Park area. They offered ESL classes and provided settlement support. Today, SEAS is a successful organization that has grown to become a beacon of the community. SEAS has expanded extensively as a multi-service social agency that focuses primarily on family and immigrant services. I know that SEAS has had a significant impact on the lives of many newcomers in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt. They support ethnic communities, such as the Chinese, Filipino and Vietnamese communities, in the city of Toronto and York region.

I'm very familiar with the SEAS Centre for their work in the community, but also as a former public health nurse in our community. I want to congratulate the president of the SEAS board, Michelle Chu, and Rebecca Lee, the executive director, for their leadership and commitment to provide quality programs and services to welcome new Canadians in the city of Toronto and York region community.

Finally, I want to congratulate SEAS for their 27th anniversary.

MW CANADA

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm proud to rise today to thank a business in my riding for embracing lifelong learning and doing their part by helping an employee complete his or

her high school education. For years, MW Canada has been committed to ensuring that employees have the time and the resources to complete their high school and high-school-equivalent education.

Statistics show that adults who are at lower levels of literacy are 2.5 times more likely to suffer unemployment than those who reach literacy levels of 3 or higher. Canadians with level 1 literacy experience daily challenges such as trouble filling out a catalogue order form, completing a job application form, using online banking, completing an online application for employment insurance, and reading health and wellness information.

In my private member's bill, the Promoting Educational Success Tax Credit Act, employers like MW Canada will receive a 25% tax credit for helping to ensure that their employees acquire the tools they need to function in today's economy.

But MW Canada's actions will have a greater effect down the road. Statistics show us that the single greatest thing that we can do to ensure that our children are excited about education is to value education ourselves.

An American study by the National Center for Children in Poverty found that almost three quarters of all children with parents who have not completed high school will be raised in low-income homes. The same study shows that the number drops to less than half for those with a high school education.

MW Canada continues to raise the bar for their employees, and I'm proud to acknowledge them today. I encourage all members to speak with businesses in their riding about how the Promoting Educational Success Tax Credit Act can help bring a stronger Ontario.

LACROIX SPORTS

M. Phil McNeely: J'aimerais m'adresser à cette Chambre aujourd'hui pour souligner le succès d'une institution locale située à Orléans : Lacroix Sports, située en plein coeur d'Orléans, célèbre cette année 40 ans de loyaux services auprès de la communauté.

Dans le domaine du commerce au détail, peu nombreux sont ceux qui peuvent se vanter d'être une institution. Des clients fidèles et le désir de s'impliquer dans la communauté sont les éléments nécessaires pour créer une telle institution, et c'est exactement ce qui motive le propriétaire de ce magasin à succès, M. André Lacroix.

M. Lacroix et ses employés se sont toujours efforcés d'offrir à leur clientèle un service hors pair. Son implication sur la scène sportive locale ainsi que dans la communauté n'est plus un secret pour personne. La philosophie de base du magasin Lacroix Sports de procurer aux sportifs de la région des articles de sport de qualité à des prix compétitifs en font un pionnier dans le monde du sport à Orléans.

En 1995, Lacroix Sports se joint à La Source du sport, un réseau de magasins de sports indépendant. La Source du sport satisfait maintenant les besoins d'une troisième génération de sportifs. Je me dois donc de féliciter cette

entreprise d'Orléans qui non seulement est un succès mais qui en plus redonne à la communauté. C'est plus d'un million de dollars que Lacroix Sports a recueilli au fil des ans avec son tournoi de golf annuel pour venir en aide à des individus et organismes locaux.

Alors, félicitations à Lacroix Sports et à son propriétaire André Lacroix pour ses 40 ans de loyaux services à Orléans.

HOSPICE CARE

Mr. Jim Wilson: I rise today to recognize and thank the board, staff, volunteers and supporters of Matthews House Hospice in Alliston and Hospice Georgian Triangle in Collingwood. Both hospices have worked diligently over the years and have provided tremendous end-of-life care.

But while these local hospices receive wonderful support from the families, seniors and businesses in my communities, government support has not been so forthcoming. In fact, there seems to be a huge discrepancy between how hospices are funded in Ontario. Hospices surrounding my riding, in Barrie, Huntsville, Richmond Hill and Owen Sound, all receive operational funding from the province. In fact, Owen Sound was approved for funding, and they don't even have a facility built yet.

My question to the Premier and the Minister of Health is simple: Why is there such a divergence of support from the province for the people of Simcoe-Grey?

Matthew's House submitted a request for operational funding for a five-bed facility in April and have heard nothing from the government since. Their four-bed residential facility is up and running.

Hospice Georgian Triangle presented their pre-capital submission for operational funding back in July and have also heard nothing. They have shovels in the ground to build their new six-bed facility.

My riding is doing its part; the people there believe it's time for the government to do its part. We're not asking for new money. We're simply asking for our fair share. When is the government going to create a fair and comprehensive strategy to deal with this issue and respond to the needs of the residents in Simcoe-Grey?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MAJOR WILLIAM HALTON
DAY ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE JOUR
DU MAJOR WILLIAM HALTON

Mr. Chudleigh moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 142, An Act to proclaim Major William Halton Day / Projet de loi 142, Loi proclamant le Jour du major William Halton.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The bill proclaims September 22 in each year as Major William Halton Day or, in short form, Halton Day.

If I may, Mr. Speaker, Major William Halton was known throughout the area for his support of the veterans of the War of 1812. He was a caring man who deserves that recognition, for which the reputation of Halton still carries on, caring for our vets.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: A point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order: The member from Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, we're going to have an important debate in this House this afternoon in regard to Lincoln Alexander Day, a bill that I think this entire House is going to support. I would like to seek unanimous consent in order to be able to move a motion in regard to that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins—James Bay is seeking unanimous consent to move a motion regarding private members' business this afternoon. Do we agree? Agreed.

The member from Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I seek unanimous consent, once Bill 125, An Act to proclaim Lincoln Alexander Day, 2013, is passed at second reading, that it immediately be called for third reading; and that Bill 52, Sikh Heritage Month Act, 2013, be discharged from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and be ordered to third reading and called for a third reading vote; and that Bill 53, Children and Youth in Care Day Act, 2013, be discharged from the Standing Committee on General Government and that it be called for a third reading vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): To provide the member with some clarity, you received unanimous consent to deal with Bill 125 only.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): So you're asking for another unanimous consent?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Okay. We will dispense with the unanimous consent, and now we will deal with this unanimous consent.

Do we agree with this unanimous consent?

I heard a no.

It is now time for introduction of bills.

The member from Scarborough—Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to move a motion with respect to private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Scarborough—Agincourt is seeking unanimous consent to move a motion regarding private members' time. Do we agree? Agreed.

The member from Scarborough—Agincourt.

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Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Mr. Speaker—that the order of the House dated May 9, 2013, referring Bill 53 to the Standing Committee on General Government be discharged and that the bill be ordered for third reading; and that when the order for third reading of the bill is called, the question shall be put on the motion for third reading of the bill without debate or amendment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Could I have the paper sent? Page, please pick up the paper and give it to the table. We'll dispense with this once the material is presented to the table.

The member from Scarborough—Agincourt moves that the order of House dated May 9, 2013, referring Bill 53 to the Standing Committee on General Government be discharged and that the bill be ordered for third reading; and that when the order for third reading of the bill is called, the question shall be put on the motion for third reading of the bill without debate or amendment.

Do we agree? I heard a no.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins—James Bay on a point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I'll try this again, maybe in a different way. I think all of us here are trying to do the right thing in this Legislature. I know the member from—I don't know the riding—Mr. Arnott is trying to do a bill that everybody is going to support. Nobody is going to oppose it. We think it's a great bill. But I think it's also an opportunity for all of us, in the spirit of trying to work together within this House, that I seek unanimous consent to move a motion in regard to private members' business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins—James Bay is seeking unanimous consent to move a motion regarding private members' business. Do we agree? Agreed.

The member from Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Again, Speaker, I will try again, in the spirit of trying to do what's right here.

I seek unanimous consent that once Bill 125, An Act to proclaim Lincoln Alexander Day, 2013, passes second reading, that it immediately be called for third reading; and that Bill 52, Sikh Heritage Month Act, 2013, be discharged from the Standing Committee on Social Policy, and be ordered for third reading and called for a vote; and that Bill 53, Children and Youth in Care Day Act, 2013, be discharged from the Standing Committee on General Government and be called for a third reading vote as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Bisson is seeking unanimous consent to call Bill 125, An Act to proclaim Lincoln Alexander Day, 2013—calling for second reading—that it immediately be called for third reading; and that Bill 52, Sikh Heritage Month Act, 2013, be discharged from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and be ordered for third reading, and that at the order of third reading be immediately called and the question put on the motion for third reading without

debate; and that Bill 53, the Children and Youth in Care Act, 2013, be discharged from the Standing Committee on General Government and be called for a third reading vote.

Do we agree? I heard a no.

MOTIONS

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's now time for motions.

The member from Wellington–Halton Hills on a point of order.

Mr. Ted Arnott: No, it's a motion—oh, sorry. You're right.

On a point of order, I'm seeking unanimous consent of the House with respect and consideration for Bill 125, An Act to proclaim Lincoln Alexander Day. I'm seeking unanimous consent to move a motion.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Wellington–Halton Hills is seeking unanimous consent to move a motion regarding Bill 125.

Do we agree? Agreed.

The member from Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Speaker, I move that, during consideration of private members' public business this afternoon, in the event that Bill 125, An Act to proclaim Lincoln Alexander Day, 2013, receives second reading, the order for third reading shall immediately be called and the question put immediately without debate or amendment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Wellington–Halton Hills is moving that, during consideration of private members' public business this afternoon, Bill 125, An Act to proclaim Lincoln Alexander Day, 2013—receive second reading, the order for third reading shall immediately be called and the question put immediately without debate or amendment.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I can recognize the member for a point of order while I'm in this. I just want to make sure that he realizes that I'm now at the point to vote on that.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Again, in the spirit of co-operation, I would like to amend his motion to add both bills that we had spoken about earlier as part of that particular motion.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): So, if I have this right, that is a request for unanimous consent to add the other two bills. Do we agree that the other two bills will be added to this amendment? I heard a no. The member may—

Mr. Ted Arnott: Just a point of order, Mr. Speaker. If I could just point out to the House and remind the House that this is a private member's bill that is co-sponsored by members from all three parties. The member for

Scarborough–Rouge River and the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek are co-sponsors of this bill. This is not my bill; this is our bill, Mr. Speaker, and I'm asking that we deal with it this afternoon and pass it into law.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank you for the clarification, but we need to finish this unanimous consent, which is for Bill 125 and Bill 125 only: that third reading be called immediately, and that the question be put immediately, without debate or amendment. Do we agree? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. Jim Wilson: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe–Grey on a point of order for unanimous consent.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I seek unanimous consent to move a motion regarding Bills 71 and 105.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe–Grey is requesting unanimous consent to move a motion regarding Bills 71 and 105. Do we agree? Agreed.

The member from Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I move unanimous consent that Bill 71, Protecting Child Performers Act, 2013, be scheduled for one day of public hearings and one day of clause-by-clause on December 4th and 11th in the Standing Committee on General Government; and

That the order of the House dated November 4, 2013, referring Bill 105, An Act to Amend the Employer Health Tax Act to the Standing Committee on General Government be discharged; and

That Bill 105 now be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs for one day of public hearings on Monday, December 2, 2013, from 9 a.m. until 12 p.m. and 1 p.m. until 4 p.m., and one day of clause-by-clause on Wednesday, December 4, 2013, from 1 p.m. until 4 p.m.; and

That, if the committee does not report Bill 105 to the House on the next sessional day following the day scheduled for clause-by-clause consideration, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and reported to the House.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order for the member from Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Just to the opposition House leader: The copy you gave me said December 3 and December 5. You read differently. I'm just wondering.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Yes, it was just changed, so I'm sorry to not notify you of that.

Interjection.

Mr. Jim Wilson: It's the 2nd and 4th. Any problems? Okay. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Wilson moves that Bill 71, Protecting Child Performers Act, 2013, be scheduled for one day of public hearings and one day of

clause-by-clause on December 4th and 11th in the Standing Committee on General Government; and

That the order of the House dated November 4, 2013, referring Bill 105, An Act to Amend the Employer Health Tax Act to the Standing Committee on General Government be discharged; and

That Bill 105 now be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs for one day of public hearings on Monday, December 2, 2013, from 9 a.m. until 12 p.m. and 1 p.m. until 4 p.m., and one day of clause-by-clause on Wednesday, December 4, 2013, from 1 p.m. until 4 p.m.; and

That, if the committee does not report Bill 105 to the House on the next sessional day following the day scheduled for clause-by-clause consideration, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and reported to the House.

Do we agree? Agreed. The motion carries.

Motion agreed to.

1330

VISITORS

Mr. Frank Klees: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Newmarket–Aurora on a point of order.

Mr. Frank Klees: Thank you, Speaker. I want to extend a special welcome to the students from Foundations Private School, from Aurora, grades 4 and 5. They're here with their teacher, Pamela Spencer.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for petitions.

PETITIONS

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas pedestrians and cyclists are increasingly using secondary provincial highways to support healthy lifestyles and expand active transportation;

"Whereas paved shoulders on highways enhance public safety for all highway users, expand tourism opportunities and support good health;

"Whereas paved shoulders help to reduce the maintenance cost of repairs to highway surfaces; and

"Whereas the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka's private member's bill provides for a minimum one-metre paved shoulder for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the private member's bill, which requires a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on designated provincially owned highways, receive swift passage through the legislative process."

I'm pleased to affix my signature and send it to the table with page Zachary.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, as you are aware, I did introduce the people from Oxford People Against the Landfill earlier, who weren't here. On their behalf, I want to present this petition. It is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the purpose of Ontario's Environmental Protection Act (EPA) is to 'provide for the protection and conservation of the natural environment.' RSO 1990, c. E.19, s. 3.; and

"Whereas 'all landfills will eventually release leachate to the surrounding environment and therefore all landfills will have some impact on the water quality of the local ecosystem.'—Threats to Sources of Drinking Water and Aquatic Health in Canada;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That section 27 of the EPA should be reviewed and amended immediately to prohibit the establishment of new or expanded landfills at fractured bedrock sites and other hydrogeologically unsuitable locations within the province of Ontario."

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the people from OPAL for presenting this petition, I want to thank you for allowing me to read it, and I'll affix my signature.

AIR QUALITY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Dufferin-Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Simcoe–Grey. You're expanding my riding. I'm into the next county now.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean Program was implemented only as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

"Whereas vehicle emissions have declined so significantly from 1998 to 2010 that they are no longer among the major domestic contributors of smog in Ontario; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

"Whereas from 1999 to 2010 the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and

"Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error; and

"Whereas the new Drive Clean test no longer assesses tailpipe emissions, but instead scans the on-board diagnostics systems of vehicles, which already perform a series of continuous and periodic emissions checks; and

"Whereas the new Drive Clean test has caused the failure rate to double in less than two months as a result of technical problems with the new emissions testing method; and

"Whereas this new emissions test has caused numerous false 'fails', which have resulted in the overcharging of testing fees for Ontario drivers and car dealerships, thereby causing unwarranted economic hardship and stress;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program."

I agree with this petition, and I want to thank Mr. Larry Moore of Tottenham for sending it to me.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas Kimm Fletcher, a mother of two diagnosed with brain cancer, has been prescribed with the drug Avastin to help prolong her life;

"Whereas the Ontario health ministry's Committee to Evaluate Drugs (CED) has indicated that the use of this drug is associated with higher, progression-free survival rates;

"Whereas this drug is not covered under OHIP—but is in other provincial jurisdictions;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario Parliament call on the Premier and her health minister to extend OHIP funding of the drug Avastin, so that Kimm Fletcher, and others like her, can have as much time to enjoy with her family as possible; and to tell the Wynne administration that 'Our health care system includes Kimm Fletcher.'"

I agree with this petition. I'm pleased to sign my name to it, and I pass it to page Spencer.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas aggressive dogs are found among all breeds and mixed breeds; and

"Whereas breed-specific legislation has been shown to be an expensive and ineffective approach to dog bite prevention; and

"Whereas problem dog owners are best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible behaviour;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To repeal the breed-specific sections of the Dog Owners' Liability Act (2005) and any related acts, and to instead implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and types."

I couldn't agree more. I'm going to sign this along with the tens of thousands now and give it to page Najat to deliver to the table.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I've previously read this petition into the record, and I don't think it would be productive to reread it. But at the time when I presented it, I did mean to say and forgot that 2,600 people in my riding with concerns over the landfill signed this petition.

SOUTH BRUCE GREY HEALTH CENTRE

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Health Minister Deb Matthews announced a 1% funding supplement to recognize the unique needs and challenges of small rural hospitals; and

"Whereas the South Bruce Grey Health Centre is one corporation made up entirely of four small rural hospitals; and

"Whereas the South Bruce Grey Health Centre was shut out of the 1% funding supplement that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is allocating to small hospitals; and

"Whereas the province is using weighted cases as a dividing line and has not recognized that the South Bruce Grey Health Centre is composed of four separate small hospitals; and

"Whereas this funding oversight will cost the South Bruce Grey Health Centre approximately \$300,000 in much-needed operating revenue;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To review the impact on our residents that this funding decision will have and to request that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate the 1% funding supplement for small rural hospitals to the South Bruce Grey Health Centre."

I totally agree with this petition. I'll affix my signature and send it to the table with Ana.

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn's, Alzheimer's, arthritic diabetes, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Canada, but scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe; and

"Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of their professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario health insurance plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process of establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives 45% to 95% of the time;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to direct that the Ontario public health system and OHIP include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme disease in Ontario and to have everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed diagnostic and successful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians."

I'm pleased to affix my signature, Speaker, and send the petition to the table with page Zachary.

RURAL AND NORTHERN ONTARIO TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the loss of transportation service will further destabilize rural economies and impede on residents' ability to get to school, work, doctor or hospital appointments, or any other service unavailable locally;

"Whereas the prosperity, productivity and participation of all segments of society depends on a viable, accessible transportation network;

"Whereas the lack of a transportation service negatively impacts those people with special needs, accessibility challenges, seniors and those living below the poverty level;

"Whereas Greyhound Canada plans to cut bus service and Via Rail plans to cut train service in rural Ontario;

"Whereas there is no secondary carrier serving rural Ontario's students, workers, volunteers, tourists, business travellers and any resident without a driver's licence;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately strike an all-party committee at Queen's Park to study transportation needs in rural and northern Ontario."

I support this petition and will send it with page Najat.

1340

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we, the residents of Clearview township and neighbouring townships, oppose the wpd Canada Fairview wind project on Fairgrounds Road and all wind energy projects in Clearview township; and

"Whereas we support the petition of mayors and councillors from 80 municipalities, farm organizations, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, which petition requested

that the province place an immediate moratorium on all wind projects until an independent and comprehensive health study has determined that turbine noise is safe to human health, amongst other things; and

"Whereas wpd Canada's Fairview wind project violates the OLS airspace and usability of registered aerodromes in Clearview, including Collingwood Regional Airport and Stayner field, and wpd Canada's draft renewable energy approvals reports do not recognize these impacts or the jurisdiction of the government of Canada; and

"Whereas wpd Canada is seeking final approval from the province for the Fairview wind project prior to completion of the federal Health Canada study and prior to federal actions to protect aviation safety;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario agree and accept that until the federal health study is completed and federal aeronautical zoning is in place, that it will immediately take whatever action is necessary to give full effect to a moratorium on all wind turbine development in Ontario, including all projects for which final approvals have not been given."

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

CANCER TREATMENT

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "Whereas Kimm Fletcher, a mother of two diagnosed with brain cancer, has been prescribed with the drug Avastin to help prolong her life;

"Whereas the Ontario health ministry's Committee to Evaluate Drugs (CED) has indicated that the use of this drug is associated with higher, progression-free survival rates;

"Whereas this drug is not covered under OHIP—but is in other provincial jurisdictions;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario Parliament call on the Premier and her health minister to extend OHIP funding of the drug Avastin, so that Kimm Fletcher, and others like her, can have as much time to enjoy with her family as possible; and to tell the Wynne administration that 'Our health care system includes Kimm Fletcher.'"

I totally agree with this petition. I'll affix my signature and send it to the table with Spencer.

MARKDALE HOSPITAL

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Grey Bruce Health Services' Markdale hospital is the only health care facility between Owen Sound and Orangeville on the Highway 10 corridor;

"Whereas the community of Markdale rallied to raise \$13 million on the promise they would get a new state-of-the-art hospital in Markdale;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care announce as soon as possible its intended construction date for the new Markdale hospital and ensure that the care needs of the patients and families of our community are met in a timely manner."

I support this petition and will affix my signature and send it with page Amy.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Jim Wilson: "Whereas Kimm Fletcher, a mother of two diagnosed with brain cancer, has been prescribed with the drug Avastin to help prolong her life;

"Whereas the Ontario health ministry's Committee to Evaluate Drugs ... has indicated that the use of this drug is associated with higher, progression-free survival rates;

"Whereas this drug is not covered under OHIP—but is in other provincial jurisdictions;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario Parliament call on the Premier and her health minister to extend OHIP funding of the drug Avastin, so that Kimm Fletcher, and others like her, can have as much time to enjoy with her family as possible; and to tell the Wynne administration that 'Our health care system includes Kimm Fletcher.'"

I certainly agree with this.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas Kimm Fletcher, a mother of two diagnosed with brain cancer, has been prescribed with the drug Avastin to help prolong her life;

"Whereas the Ontario health ministry's Committee to Evaluate Drugs ... has indicated that the use of this drug is associated with higher, progression-free survival rates;

"Whereas this drug is not covered under OHIP—but is in other provincial jurisdictions;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario Parliament call on the Premier and her health minister to extend OHIP funding of the drug Avastin, so that Kimm Fletcher, and others like her, can have as much time to enjoy with her family as possible; and to tell the Wynne administration that 'Our health care system includes Kimm Fletcher.'"

I'm pleased to affix my signature and send it to the table.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Joe Dickson: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the regions of York and Durham are at the final stages of completing an EA for the YD-WPCP (York Durham water pollution control plant's) outfall; and

"Whereas the regions of York and Durham have chosen as the final solution an alternative which will not address the quantity of total phosphorus (TP) nor soluble

reactive phosphorus (SRP) being deposited into Lake Ontario; and

"Whereas Lake Ontario has been identified as the most stressed lake of the Great Lakes in the July/August 2013 issue of Canadian Geographic; and

"Whereas the town of Ajax and PACT POW (Pickering Ajax Citizens Together—Protecting our Water) have documented the excessive algae blooms on the Ajax waterfront with photos and complaints to the region of Durham; and

"Whereas SRP, and indirectly TP, contribute to the growth of algae in Lake Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ask that the government of Ontario require the regions of York and Durham to implement an alternative that will reduce the amount of phosphorous (both TP and SRP) being deposited into Lake Ontario from the YD-WPCP."

I will attach my name to that, Mr. Speaker.

VISITORS

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member from Brampton West.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce some very special friends who are visiting. Two of them are from Brampton, Baljinder Lailna and Surinder Dhaliwal, and Mr. Gurkirpal Singh is visiting us from India. I would like to take this time to welcome them to the Legislature.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Mississauga—Cooksville.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Speaker, as you're aware, the member for Wellington—Halton Hills was able to successfully get unanimous consent for his Bill 125, and I would now like to seek unanimous consent to move a motion with respect to private members' public business.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Mississauga—Cooksville has requested unanimous consent to move a motion. Agreed?

I heard a no.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: You have to give us some notice.

Mr. Jim Wilson: You have to talk to us first.

Mr. John O'Toole: You have to talk to us first.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

CAPPING TOP PUBLIC SECTOR SALARIES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE PAFONNEMENT DES HAUTS TRAITEMENTS DU SECTEUR PUBLIC

Ms. Horwath moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 136, An Act to cap the top public sector salaries /
Projet de loi 136, Loi plafonnant les hauts traitements du
secteur public.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my privilege and pleasure to stand on behalf of New Democrats to once again urge this Liberal government to do the right thing by the people of this province and cap the top public sector salaries so that we can get some fairness back in the province of Ontario.

Ontarians deserve to know that their money is being treated with respect, and when they see people in the public service, quite frankly, making sky-high salaries that keep growing, it makes them wonder exactly what the priority of this Liberal government is.

It's a simple plan. In fact, it's such a simple plan that it takes but one page of legislative language to actually enact it.

As people across this province have been asked to tighten their belts by the Liberals, it's only fair that we put a cap on those at the very top of the public sector income level.

A cap of twice the salary of the Premier would mean that the highest salary paid to any public sector executive in this province would be \$418,000. Now, by my calculation, that's a pretty generous salary.

In 2012, the Liberals actually claimed that they were ready to move on this initiative that New Democrats have been raising since at least 2010. The Minister of Finance of the day said that a cap "will work to bring some of the overly generous compensation packages back to reality."
1350

Now, the fact is that some of these salaries just don't square with reality, and, in fact, New Democrats have been saying that for a long time. Finally, the former finance minister, back in 2012, came to reality, and realized that that's in fact the case. Right now, in the public sector, there are more than 180 people—more than 180—who are making twice the salary of the Premier or more. In fact, there are 25 people who are making more than three times the salary of the Premier, and some of them are making significantly more than three times the salary of the Premier. But rather than take any action, the Liberals, after they had introduced this idea back in 2012, decided instead to prorogue the House, because they were more interested in their own political fortunes than they were in actually delivering results for the people who make this province work.

Since then, we've heard a lot of talk, but we've seen no action. In fact, the Premier was sworn in about 10 months ago, and since then Ontarians haven't seen anything related to the capping of CEO salaries at all. They've heard a lot of conversations, but they haven't seen any action. People respect the work that public sector executives do. I think Ontarians respect those positions and respect the hard work and the many hours that get put in by these folks. But people also want to

know that our public dollars are being treated with respect as well.

Over the last four years, Kevin Smith has made \$2.8 million, and now he's telling the people of Niagara that the cupboard is bare and that people in Welland, in Port Colborne and Fort Erie have to have their hospitals closed. He didn't have his wages cut back, but hospitals have to close.

There are always tough choices to be made, and we know that. New Democrats understand that very, very clearly. But I think Ontarians expect us to focus on making choices that help everyday people instead of helping CEOs make sky-high, six-figure salaries. The Liberals seem to want to close hospitals and fire nurses so that they can keep paying hospital CEOs top salaries. It doesn't make sense, and it's the wrong priority.

For context, in terms of CEO salaries and what's happening in other provinces, let me share a little bit of information with you. The CEO of Manitoba Hydro, which runs the entire hydro system from generation to delivery and everything in between in that province, earned—guess what, Speaker?—not \$418,000, which would be the cap if this bill became legislation or became law in this province. That CEO at Manitoba Hydro earned \$229,000 in 2011, so just a little bit over what our Premier earns.

The head of Hydro One here in Ontario made \$1 million, and the head of the OPG, Ontario Power Generation, made \$1.7 million in the same year. Hospital CEOs at all five major downtown Toronto hospitals made well above the proposed \$418,000-per-year cap, and some of them are pushing \$1 million.

In comparison, the average household income in Ontario is \$73,290. The CEO of OPG will earn more by January 16 than the average Ontario household will make in an entire year. It'll take the CEO of Hydro One until January 27 to earn as much as the average household will make in an entire year. That gives you some perspective of what we're talking about when we talk about these salaries being totally out of whack. Kevin Smith will have earned more than the average household by the second week of February.

There is no doubt in our minds that it is time for some balance here in Ontario. People are finding it harder and harder, though, to trust anything that the Liberals say. When I introduced this bill, the Premier—the then Minister of Transportation—voted against it. But in 2012, as I already mentioned, the then Minister of Finance indicated that in fact Liberals were going to move forward on it. The government House leader said yesterday that the government would think about it.

We know the Liberals are happy to make promises; we know they're happy to discuss issues. But the problem is that they never, ever deliver for the people of this province. So while they've been telling people to tighten their belts and telling folks that they're going to have to suck up the high electricity prices, they're just going to have to deal with the fact that wages are stagnant and life is getting tougher and tougher—that's what they're

telling Ontarians—and in the meantime, they're telling the top managers in the public sector that they can continue to get sky-high raises year in and year out.

You know, the CEO of Hydro One actually got a raise of \$70,000. That's almost as much as the average family pulls in in an entire year, and that was only the raise of the CEO at Hydro One. Last year, 4,800 managers got a bonus. The average family in Ontario hasn't seen a raise in years; in fact, hundreds of thousands have seen their income go down since the recession hit.

The Liberal record speaks for itself; it is a very clear record. But I want to talk about the Conservative record a little bit, because yesterday the Hudak team showed again that they're firmly planted on the sidelines, screaming and yelling, and not delivering a whole heck of a lot for people either. I was really surprised to hear PC members say that they weren't going to support this legislation.

New Democrats—let's be clear—are bringing forward a practical tool to get the highest public sector executive pay under control, and the Conservatives say that they will not support that. Now, the PCs never miss an opportunity to tell Ontarians that they need to have the right to work for less. That's their agenda: Ontarians have to have the right to work for less. But they seem to think that the public sector CEOs should be able to have, and be entitled to, a sky-high six-figure salary. Something's out of whack there. Instead of doing anything to stop waste, the PCs seem to think that hard-working families need to earn less and think that the sky-high limit should be in place for those at the top echelons of our public sector. Where's the balance there? Where's the priority there? It's not with regular people; it's not with everyday Ontarians.

Ontarians expect their government to respect the public purse, not just talk about respecting their money, and that's why New Democrats are calling on this cap of public sector CEO salaries, because we've heard a lot of talk from the Liberals, a lot of talk, but as I've said, we don't see any action coming from that side of the House.

It's also why we ensured that Ontario will have a Financial Accountability Office, frankly. We made that a condition of the budget, but now we're watching as Liberals are backpedalling on that commitment as well. We know there are savings to be found in LHINs and CCACs, yet the government refuses to take any of our advice in making sure that those savings are realized.

We're not alone in facing this issue of skyrocketing CEO salaries. It's happening around the world, and we want to take concrete steps just like other jurisdictions are taking concrete steps as well, and I'm going to share some of those with you.

Spain's Conservative government capped executive salaries at state-owned companies at €105,000 in 2012. The French are moving to cap CEO salaries at 20 times the rate of the lowest-paid employees. The Dutch government is moving to limit golden parachutes at €75,000. Germany and Sweden joined the Obama government in capping CEO pay in companies that receive

public money. Speaker, Ontario is falling behind while these leaders are actually taking on an issue that the public is demanding be addressed in jurisdictions all around the world.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel has said that she'll move to place limits on management compensation, saying this: She understands, "when people shake their heads over salaries that tip the scale"—and those are her words—that means the government has to act, and I believe that Ontarians are shaking their head day in and day out here in this province, as well.

Our bill is a very fair, very reasonable and respectful bill. It takes a reasonable approach to make sure that we're not doing anything to rip up existing contracts or existing agreements but acknowledging that we have to start somewhere and start cracking this nut, because the people of Ontario deserve their dollars to be invested in things that make Ontario a great place, not just making great the people at the top so that they can be in the seven-figure salary range.

1400

Ontarians want their government to put them first. Whether it's creating jobs, strengthening health care, making life more affordable or making government more transparent, we need to respect public dollars. New Democrats do that. We need to ensure that public dollars are being invested in putting people first, not on sky-high CEO salaries, and we need to see action. I invite the Liberals to adopt this bill by voting for it today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate. The—

Mr. Toby Barrett: Haldimand—Norfolk.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Haldimand—Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thanks, Speaker. I welcome debate on this bill capping top public-sector salaries. I do agree that we're long overdue for some austerity in government budgeting, because we're obviously in an economic period of austerity. I agree that it's time to put an end to the gravy train.

The question out there: Are top bureaucrats overpaid? Are top bureaucrats overcompensated? Are all bureaucrats, on average, overcompensated? Again, questions: Are all public servants—whether it's federal, provincial or municipal—overcompensated? You have to include not just wages and salaries. We should be talking about all of the perks: the pensions, the early retirement, the total package.

There's some research. We have to look at the research. We want research that's, obviously, neutral and objective; that may be hard to find, depending on who sponsored the research. I've looked at the Fraser Institute, the Frontier Centre and the CFIB. The Canadian Labour Congress has done some work on this as well.

The research I have does indicate that if you take a look at all the public servants, not just those at the top, public servants are overcompensated. They're overcompensated by something in the order of 30% in the province of Ontario, compared to similar work in the private sector.

Now, I listened to the leader of our third party in the media studio, and she said something—I don't have the exact quote. I recall her saying that public-sector servants are ridiculously overcompensated. Now, that's a sign of fiscal conservatism in my mind, and I say that in the context of seeing a recent fall economic statement where our Premier is obviously very left-wing as far as matters around budgeting and the economy.

I'd like to refer to another indication from the leader of the third party. Ontario taxpayers want their money to be respected. I fully agree. Again, we have to look at pensions. We have to look at early retirement—much more than just wages.

There was an indication, too, that people are in the public service, not to get rich. I fully agree with that. I think that's what we expect as residents of Ontario and as taxpayers, those others who are essentially paying the freight, so this is a good move.

We have to put the spotlight on public sector compensation, beyond wages—vacation time, gym memberships, dental, early retirement and job security, for example—and then compare it to similar jobs in the private sector. On average, we do find that those working in the public sector—when we include in the very top level, as this private member's bill does, we see that if you've got similar work in the private sector, you're 30% off. That's not fair, and it's also expensive, as far as people paying taxes.

The Fraser Institute—there was some research arguing that very high top-compensated professionals, those at the top, if they were in the private sector, on average, would be making more. Again, that perhaps counter-indicates what we're hearing today.

Don Drummond—we all know his report: Half of government spending is on public sector compensation. This year that would be—well, we had a \$128-billion budget, so \$64 billion goes to public sector compensation; yet again, another very important reason why we should be debating this bill.

The most important thing, as was indicated, is the taxpayer. These are the people, by and large, who don't have the pensions you see in the public sector. They are the ones who are paying the freight. People getting paid by the taxpayers shouldn't get a better deal than the taxpayers themselves for doing the same kind of work.

In that context, these are some of the issues where I agree with the sentiments of this legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: As folks probably know, there's a freeze on right now for senior public sector salaries over \$150,000, and a number of other measures—we have contained spending within 1%. We are tracking ahead of schedule, about \$5 billion ahead of where we intended to be, according to our fiscal plan. This is a better record than any government in Canada, provincial or federal. It is a faster return to balance—the only one ahead of schedule—than any predecessor party in here.

While our government shares the concern about fair compensation and control, and will be bringing forward measures to do that, I am profoundly disappointed by the simplicity and almost ridiculousness of this particular position, Mr. Speaker. This is not good public policy. This is not a studied, market-based evaluation of the ranges for different types of CEO compensation—none of that. There is not a single grain of evidence that actually talks—if you want to get the best hospital CEOs, the best university presidents—about what the range of compensation is in North America. Simply to say “twice what the Premier's is” is great for probably 70% of cases. But there will be places where a hospital foundation or a university foundation wants to bring one of the world's leading academics or leading scientists here.

Right now in the United States—because our national government fails to invest in research and public sector excellence—the Obama administration, simply on artificial photosynthesis and climate change, is spending more money on that one area of research than the government of Canada does to attract all leading researchers. What they're proposing would undermine our ability as a country to attract the most outstanding academics, scientists, corporate business leaders and hospital CEOs.

This is what the NDP has become, Mr. Speaker, not the bright light of social democracy and innovative thinking. It's interesting that the leader of the third party quoted the most unpopular Premier in Europe—the person who actually practises their economic policy—President Hollande of France, who is tracking about 12% in the polls and has broken all records. This is what the NDP has become. They are like the French Socialist Party: bereft of an economic agenda, illiterate about globalization and completely bereft of an understanding of talent in an innovation economy.

Now, Mr. Speaker, why did the third party not quote Sweden, Finland and Denmark? Actually, they have a studied, market evidence-based range, and they have flexibility.

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: They're getting a little testy, Mr. Speaker, because they know I'm right. They know that this is nothing but crass politics, aimed to get—this is the same game the Tories play. You heard the member from the Tories say, “Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, people in the public sector get paid 30% more than people in the private sector, and it's unfair.” So the left here has now figured, “Well, that's working well for the Tories, so who do we attack? We can't attack public sector workers, so we'll really start attacking the high-performance people.”

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Essex, would you come to order.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: While I share the concern about bringing in controls, they're taking examples from Spain—Spain, the country that is almost insolvent. This is just absolutely, hysterically funny. They're taking their cues now from the Spanish conservative party leading the

most bankrupt government in Europe—the most unpopular president in Europe—not from the more progressive social democratic party, that actually does that.

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Do we have to control that? Yes. Have we taken steps that are way beyond what any other government has? Yes. Do we have to bring CEO salaries down? Yes. Is this the way to do it? No. This will blow up in your face. This is, Mr. Speaker—there is—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Tell that to people on social assistance raising children.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: But this is it, right? The member from Parkdale—High Park does her normal, politically correct “wrap myself in the flag of the anti-poverty activists.” The problem for my folks in St. James Town is really the problem because of what Dr. Bell gets paid at University Health Network. Well, what do you want to pay his successor? What do you want to pay if you want to get the CEO from Johns Hopkins? Don't Ontarians deserve the best scientists, deserve the best leaders?

Do I agree with you that the general pay rates are too high in senior executive salaries? Yes. Do I agree with you that there should be a systemic reduction of a lot of those? Yes. Do I think that this is the right answer? No, because it's a blunt instrument. You're doing the same things that the Tories did when they wanted an across-the-board wage freeze—and the New Democrats, Mr. Speaker, joined us. What did the Tories scream? They screamed what the NDP is about to scream at us. The Tories screamed, “Well, you guys aren't serious about wage restraints.”

Without violating collective agreements, we have basically an across-the-board wage freeze, and we didn't have to introduce the social contract that the New Democrats did, or bring forward the draconian anti-labour laws that the Conservatives did. What you're proposing for management is as ridiculous as a legislated wage freeze.

If you want to work together on something, and you actually wanted to do this in a non-partisan way, why don't we do market-based ranges? Why don't we provide flexibility where there is excellence? Why don't we have the more sophisticated kinds of approaches that Finland has—which is interesting, because the left, since Clinton and Blair, have moved mostly to become liberals because of the pragmatism of a mixed-market economy. Some 5% of companies build 50% of—

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The public sector is not a market economy; it's the public sector.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Leader of the third party, come to order, please.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The leader of the third party, who likes to call—it's fascinating to me. The leader of the third party always likes to ascribe motives to every other party, because her party, of course, doesn't do politics and doesn't talk about Niagara or Windsor for any electoral reasons, because they're above all that.

The problem is simply this: There are lots of ways to do that. Since—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Hamilton Mountain and the member for Timmins—James Bay, come to order.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'm going to wrap up, Mr. Speaker, because obviously those folks over there are so beyond criticism that they can't hear any, and can't have the courtesy to actually listen to someone without interrupting them.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'm going to ask the minister to speak through the Chair.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I think the objective is a worthy one. I just don't think this is the path to anything.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order: the member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I would seek unanimous consent to allow the Minister of Transportation to have another five minutes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): that is not a point of order.

Further debate?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to speak to Bill 136, the Capping Top Public Sector Salaries Act. But if you really agreed with this, you should have supported the wage freeze bill that we had.

This is a piece of legislation that we have seen before from the leader of the third party. A similar piece of legislation appeared before this House as 2010's Bill 57. Since then, through two budgets, the third party has propped up a Liberal government that has continued the policies the members find so distasteful.

If the member truly thought the government's spending was out of control, why was this not a deal-breaker on one of those occasions?

Bill 136 intends that “a public sector employee's salary shall not exceed the amount that is twice the Premier's annual salary”—at the moment, \$418,000.

The details are important here. “Exceptions are provided for salaries that were established before the bill comes into force, for salaries that are established under a collective agreement, and for salaries of employees prescribed by regulation for work of a scientific or technical nature.”

There is a fair bit of wiggle room. It is not clear whether this measure would address salary or—more meaningful—total compensation. It does not make explicit mention of performance bonuses or merit pay or any of the other escape clauses that allowed this government to give 98% of public service managers a bonus in 2011. Those individuals shared a \$36-million windfall and saw bonuses worth as much as 12% of their salary. So the devil is certainly in the details.

On principle, I believe that nobody in this House would have a problem with people making the wages they deserve. There is inevitably a question of who is deserving of wages, or bonuses, for that matter, but the simplicity of the formula of Bill 136 does not have any room for merit.

It is, as the Premier has said, a blunt instrument. It is a public relations posturing, not a real solution. It is yet another headline-hungry gimmick that fails to acknowledge or address the real challenges facing Ontario today.

The proof of this can be found in some simple math. Using the sunshine list as a yardstick, there are around 180 public sector executives who would be affected by this bill. There are over one million public sector employees in Ontario, many, if not most, of whom would be exempt from this bill. It would cover about half of the cost of bonuses given to those 8,700 civil service managers. Spending adds up.

What is talent worth? How much are we prepared to spend on expertise? That, Speaker, is a more complicated debate than Bill 136 is ready to attempt.

I'm not prepared to support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's an absolute honour and a privilege to stand and support a bill that is incredibly simple and straightforward, incredibly fair and open and transparent, and to cry, "A pox upon both your houses," to the Liberals and the Conservatives for not supporting this.

Let's take the Liberals, to start, Mr. Speaker. Let's look at what they're really saying. First of all, about their own Premier, they're saying that a woman who works about 12 hours a day—I'm just estimating what she puts in—seven days a week, who has post-secondary education, who had to fight for her job and has to get re-elected by the voters, is not worth even half of what some of the public CEOs are worth—who happen to be, by the way, mainly male. So I would, first of all, call them out for the misogyny implicit in their comments. That's what they're saying about their own Premier. Their own Premier: That's what they're saying.

The Conservatives are saying, "Yes, let's regulate the public sector salaries of all of those little people"—you know, the teachers and the nurses and the midwives and all of those people—"but no, no, no, the people who are at the top of organizations like hospitals and universities"—even if they have the same academic qualifications, the same years of experience—"oh, no, no, they're worth 10 times, 12 times, what those little people are worth."

Let's look at what those salaries really mean—and we're talking pre-Christmas here. We're talking pre-Christmas, when women who are heading single families—many of them are working for minimum wage and trying to buy presents for their children. Let's go to their door, Mr. Speaker, with this message. Knock on that door and tell them, "You know what? I don't care that you may have a master's and can't get a job. I don't care if you've got a BA or a PhD, or even if you're a TA or a teacher in the university structure who can't get a full-time job"—of which there are thousands. "But you are not worth what the CEOs of those companies"—mainly male, again—"are worth," even with the same academic qualifications, even with the same years of experience, but who may have connections with high places.

That's what we're really saying. Do we want to carry that message to their door? I dare you: Carry that message to the door of your constituents. That's what I dare you to do.

To the Tories: I dare you to talk about fiscal restraint and not look at the top CEO salaries. I dare you to take that message to your constituents in talking about fiscal responsibility. I mean, it's shameful. It's absolutely shameful.

Let's talk about OPA and OPG and what those salaries really mean. Take-home pay, now: Anybody who's listening to this, I don't know what your take-home pay looks like, but here's what you'd be looking at if you were one of those CEOs. You'd be looking at, probably, about \$60,000 in your pocket every month. For most people, that's the lottery, Mr. Speaker. That's winning the lottery. A million dollars a year: That's the lottery. We buy 6/49 tickets, and we don't even win that. Come on; that's the lottery. How much money do you need? How good are you?

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Really what you're saying is, "What is the worth of human labour here?" That's what you're saying. You're saying that that woman who is working as a nurse—her labour is not worth even a tenth of what the CEO of the hospital is worth. That's what you're really saying. Do you want to take that message to the door? I dare you. Take that message to the door. We will. I dare you to. I dare the Tories to take that message to the door in the next election. You knock on the door with your message of fiscal restraint, and you say, "But yet, for you, but not for your boss." Take it to the door.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'll be very quick. I think the NDP have it partially right. Our leader Tim Hudak has said that the proper solution here is an across-the-board public sector wage freeze. What the NDP are trying to do is not offend their union friends—I understand that—but that just demonstrates how illogical it would be to be in government.

Here's the real issue: I'm quite impressed with the leader of the NDP for stealing most of our lines. What she actually said today is, and I'm quoting her now, "The public sector is not a market-based economy." We agree with that observation to the extent that everyone in the public sector should be treated fairly. If the economy is going down, the public sector has to track that. We have to all work together to improve the economy to go up, because we need those essential services. We need the police and the fire, the doctors and the nurses. No one disputes that fact. But if you don't address the needs of the economy—the problem with Kathleen Wynne is, she's expanding expenditures faster than the growth of the economy. Don Drummond said it. Our leader said it. They have part of it right. Follow our lead, and you'll do fine.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm really pleased to have this opportunity to speak to this bill again. I know that our leader covered a lot of ground, and the member from Parkdale-High Park covered a lot of good ground as well. I just want to add my piece to the whole thing.

I just think if you put this to the public and you tell them, "Do you think if somebody earned \$418,000 that that would be okay as a salary?" Would they say "yea" or "nay" to that salary? Would they say, "No, it's not enough," or "It's too high"? They would say, "Would that I could have such a salary to live on on a daily basis." They would be happy as flies on you know what if they could have that kind of salary on a yearly basis.

The majority of human beings work hard. But with this government and the Tories, they are saying that if a civil servant is earning \$500,000, \$600,000, \$700,000, \$800,000, \$900,000 or \$1 million, it's okay because it's part of a market economy and we have to take care of these people. They work hard. They're intelligent. Well, as the member from Parkdale-High Park said, is the Premier not intelligent enough that she should only make 200,000-some-odd dollars, and someone working at OPG or some hospital deserves \$700,000 or a million bucks, but she's not because she's not intelligent enough or that she doesn't have the skills? That's the point that our leader is making, that no one should be making more than twice the amount of the Premier in this place. We think the Premier earns very little for getting slapped around each and every day by us and the public. Yet these civil servants make anywhere from \$500,000 to \$1.6 million, and Liberals are saying that's okay.

The Minister of Transportation is saying the NDP is not innovative enough, that this is a ridiculous proposition and that we should put this to the marketplace. What magical power do these people have that they wouldn't be satisfied with a \$418,000 salary? What magical marketplace power do they bring that they deserve to make a million bucks instead of \$418,000? How do you defend that? How do Liberals defend that? How do Tories, who on a regular basis stand here and say, "We represent the little guy"—every day, each and every day, they represent the little guy—stand up here today and say, "The NDP has got it wrong. They're doing politics. We're for the little guy, not the NDP." Please; you guys make me laugh. I crack up each and every day with the politics of the Conservative Party.

And the Liberals? For the Minister of Transportation to stand up and say how disappointed he was, how simplistic this motion is, how utterly ridiculous it is, and that he's got an innovative solution to this problem—innovating, my foot. They have done absolutely nothing on this file. He talks about innovation all the time; they have done absolutely nothing by way of innovation on this issue, and this is an important issue for the people of Ontario. It's a big issue. No one deserves to have that kind of a salary.

The member from Mississauga, I was waiting for you to speak, because I wanted to hear what you had to say, but you're waiting till the last moment. I regret not

having had a chance to hear you, but I'm going to listen to you in a moment. No one deserves this kind of salary; no one. For the Liberals to defend that, somehow saying it's too complex, it's a delicate issue and we need to let the market take care of this—no. You Liberals have it wrong on this one, and as the member from High Park has mentioned, you will face the public one of these days, and it will come soon.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's often said that for every complex and difficult problem, there is a simple and obvious solution, and it is always wrong. Such is the case with this bill that has been defeated once before and deserves the second thrashing that it's taking today.

The bill proposes choosing a purely arbitrary benchmark for the salaries of executives in the public and the broader public sectors. Why the Premier? Why not, for example, the average of a basket of private sector CEO salaries? It's purely arbitrary. The point here is not whether you believe that some, many, all or no senior executives are overpaid, underpaid or fairly compensated in the public, private or broader public sectors. The point being debated here is whether executives and the entities that employ them—the government, schools, hospitals, ministries, universities, boards, agencies and other entities—are administering their payrolls or whether rules, policies and exceptions for employees are now being made on the floor of the Legislature in this type of ad hoc fashion. Aside from the gaping legal loopholes that would mean steady work for litigation lawyers, the mechanics of making such a ham-fisted and clumsy proposal work in the real world would likely stall its implementation indefinitely.

The other key point is that the legislation is flat-out unnecessary. Ontario has frozen compensation across the public sector, and it is working. Growth in public sector compensation is far below that in the private sector, and the province is achieving through legislative action, good sense and co-operative collective bargaining far better results than what this type of unworkable populist legal sledgehammer ever could.

The proposal suggests that CEOs would find themselves perhaps slashed below the pay rate of many of the highly specialized support staff working under them. The member's bill proposes what amounts to management by exception, so what this misguided bill suggests is that top executives merely work with their boards to demote themselves to a subordinate position in which a lower-paid figurehead is the nominal CEO of the organization, but the real decision-making happens with a group of supposedly lower-ranked people in a management committee who collect money through circuitous means, such as fees and other measures. It's just not intelligent public or business policy and it deserves to go down. In the law of unintended consequences, it may not be what the member originally had in mind, but it is most certainly the outcome.

In our government, we've had a strategy to restrain the growth of public sector wages, and it has worked. We

have not chased away our best management talent, as this bill surely would. We have not forced salaried employees to either take an abrupt salary cut or to bend and twist their job descriptions, their titles and their compensation packages to conform with an arbitrary and dumb law. And let's be clear: The member suggests that beating up on fewer than 200 people across Ontario is somehow going to help bring down the deficit, or restore or bring about some sort of fiscal equilibrium that she may have in mind. It just isn't going to happen.

The member talks about how much some public sector CEOs earn relative to the average Ontario household, and she may well talk about how much the owner of a GTA-area factory makes. Or she may talk about how much money market traders or partners in law and accounting firms make, or how that could compare with professional athletes or any other benchmark. It's interesting, but it's not about proper administration in the public sector.

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The point of this is that this bill is a message to thinking Ontarians that the NDP aspires to be little other than a populist opposition party, and it says very clearly that this member and her party are simply not ready for the realities and hard choices of actual government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'm pleased to rise to share my thoughts on Bill 136. In my opinion, this will do absolutely nothing to address the real need for wage restraint in the province of Ontario. It's a red herring, a smoke-screen and a mirage. Once again, the third party is displaying, through this legislation, that they're not ready to tackle the real issues that face this province. They're trying to pull a fast one here, Speaker, and we won't stand for that.

The purported aim of capping top public sector salaries would cap executive salaries in the public service at twice the Premier's annual pay, but you really need to read the fine print of this bill to see what it actually does. Quite frankly, if the NDP were serious about public sector wage restraint, they would have supported the PC Party's across-the-board wage freeze legislation, which would have had a much bigger impact on the public purse. Instead, the NDP trot this out, which is nothing more than an attempt to appear tough on wage restraint when, in fact, it's not. In fact, it's anything but tough on wage restraint.

What they won't tell you is that only about 180 executive salaries in all the province of Ontario would be impacted. That's not even a rounding fraction. But when you read the bill, you learn it won't impact any salaries established prior to its becoming law. Even if the bill was applied retroactively, the \$20 million or so we're talking about is a far cry from the \$6 billion that could be saved through a legislated, across-the-board wage freeze, which we proposed and they rejected. Maybe the NDP needs a calculator with more than an eight-digit screen.

As I said previously, this is a red herring. We saw the NDP employ the same type of rhetoric last spring during

the gas plant scandal and the budget. They called the Liberals corrupt and liars in the morning, and then voted for the budget in the afternoon. In doing so, they propped up a government that has, in the past three years, awarded wage increases in eight of 10 contracts they negotiated, costing the province far more than they hope to save with this legislation. They say one thing and then do the opposite. The NDP has stolen page 1 out of the Wynne Liberals' playbook. They're one and the same.

Thank you for the opportunity, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I will use what's left on the clock wisely. The first thing I want everybody to understand: Let's say we look at energy, because energy has been in the news an awful lot; \$1.1 billion to save a couple of Liberal seats. Well, the CEO of Ontario Power Generation makes \$1.7 million; the CEO of Hydro One makes \$1.03 million a year. This is cash that we pay, each and every one of us, because they are part of the broader public service, and they are two CEOs who handle the energy system in Ontario.

It's funny. Just next to us is Manitoba. Manitoba did not privatize their energy system. Manitoba still has it government-owned. They have one CEO who is respected the world over. Not only does he handle power production and distribution; he handles the entire system. And he makes \$229,000 a year. How could it be that somebody who handles the entire system makes a fraction of what the CEO of Ontario Power Generation makes for handling the generation part, and a fraction of what the Hydro One CEO makes for handling the distribution part?

Other parts of our country that deal with the same top-level pool for recruitment are able to recruit at \$229,000 a year, but Ontario is not able to do any better than \$1.7 million for one part of their system. I find that hard to believe.

We find this throughout. I handle the health file for the NDP, and let me tell you, in health care it is rampant. There are more health executives making more than double what our Premier makes than there are making less.

It doesn't matter where you go. If you go to London Health Sciences Centre, it's \$600,000 a year. Although there is a salary freeze—and let me tell you, the people who deliver the care know that there's a salary freeze because their salaries have been frozen. Well, there's a salary freeze, but the CEO got a \$45,000 raise. How could that be? We can go to Sunnybrook in Toronto, just down the road. Everybody knows where that is. The CEO is at \$760,000 a year. They are part of the broader public sector that is supposed to be frozen, except that they got a raise for \$50,000 last year while this frozen policy is in place.

I can keep going on and on and on. I can go to St. Joseph's health centre in London—\$470,000, and a raise of \$20,000. You can go to any of the five major hospitals in downtown Toronto and you will see the same thing.

Or we could go to Niagara. We were talking about Niagara this week and the Niagara Health System. Everybody knows Kevin Smith now on a first-name basis. He's the person making recommendations for closing all the little hospitals down Niagara way. Well, he makes \$721,000, and in the last four years he cashed in—\$2.8 million of taxpayers' money went into his salary.

We can do better, and that starts with capping CEO salaries at twice the Premier's salary.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The leader of the third party, you have two minutes.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I want to thank all of the members who participated in the debate today. I can tell you, I am quite pleased with the colleagues in the NDP caucus, obviously, who support this initiative.

I guess "disappointed" is the wrong word; I think "disgusted" is the word that I would like to use when I look at where the other two parties sit on this particular issue. This issue is not new. It continues to be a problem here in this province, and as we've just heard from the speaker who spoke before me, the member for Nickel Belt, the Liberals have pretended for the last several years to get a grip on this issue and actually start dealing with these runaway compensation packages, but they have not been successful.

Now the Liberals are claiming that some kind of market voodoo they come up with is going to somehow create the answer. Well, I have to tell you, even the members of the Liberal caucus who got up to speak to this bill do not have the information, the understanding and the knowledge to be truthful in this House, because they don't even know what's happening with executive compensation in the public sector. That is problematic. You can't solve a problem if you don't admit that there's a problem, and there is a problem here.

When it comes to the Conservatives, I just can't understand it, except perhaps that maybe they're friends with those people who are in those seven-digit salaries. Maybe they're the buddies of those folks. They go out on the golf course with them. They hang out with them on Bay Street. I don't know, but what I do have to tell you is this: The people of this province expect their public sector employees to be respectful of the public dollar and to have a salary that is within a reasonable range of what everyday people are able to earn. It shouldn't be dozens and dozens of times more. That is not fair.

Private sector, God bless. Public sector, let's have some responsibility and fairness.

VISITORS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery a delegation from the Senate of Kenya, of the Parliament of the Republic of Kenya. With us is Mrs. Consolata Munga, senior deputy clerk and head of the delegation; Mr. Samuel Njuguna, director of committee services; Mrs. Serah Mbuli Kioko, director of legislative and procedural services; Mr. Kefa Omoti, principal research assistant;

Mr. Denis Abisai, principal legal counsel; Mr. George Wanyoko, senior assistant Hansard editor; and Mr. Edwin Afande, first counsellor, Kenya high commission in Ottawa. Welcome to our guests from the Republic of Kenya.

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RURAL AND NORTHERN ONTARIO TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Bill Walker: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should immediately strike an all-party committee at Queen's Park to study transportation needs in rural and northern Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Bill Walker: I would like to preface this debate with an undeniable fact: Presently in rural and northern Ontario, which is home to two million people, public transportation is essentially non-existent. That's 393 communities where residents cannot readily access transportation to get to work or doctor's appointments or to visit family and friends.

Some of you sitting to the left of me and across from me represent these communities. You see first-hand the struggle your constituents face in completing very basic everyday tasks, and that without the convenience of a car, life very quickly becomes challenging and frustrating. You know first-hand that without access to some mode of transportation, these families face a serious and deep disadvantage as they're restricted from participation in social and economic opportunities.

Rural and northern Ontario comprises nearly 88% of Ontario's land mass but has only 6.5% of our total population. Its proportion of seniors are growing faster than the province's. It has experienced an outmigration of youth that is unprecedented and a continuing cycle of lower incomes and greater poverty. The bottom line is that mobility directly impacts our quality of life every day. We need transportation for vitality, healthy growing communities, social agencies, the private sector, health agencies, schools and our jobs and our economy, Speaker.

It has a huge impact for the ability of people to find and maintain a job, especially in today's dire economic circumstances. Everyone in this has a stake. Let's act now and avert another looming crisis.

In my current role as critic for children and youth, I've been out travelling the province, meeting with people, and in my backyard of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound as well. What I'm hearing is that youth are having huge opportunities diminished for them because they don't have public transportation. They can't get out to some of the opportunities that are existing for them. In some cases, because they can't get out to even get the training, then there isn't that opportunity, or they're leaving our communities altogether.

With an already limited availability of education and training programs in rural and northern parts of Ontario,

our youth is forced to move to urban centres. With that, they're forced to negotiate long-distance travel, and in many cases, once they get there, they don't come home, and we lose some of our brightest and best. Regrettably, with the recent suspension of private carrier services by Greyhound, negotiating these distances has hit a snag. Yet again, the people who need the transportation the most seem to be getting hit the most by this downsizing.

In my own backyard, Craig Dawson, a business entrepreneur observed, "I have seen many smart kids from the Bruce Peninsula discontinue their post-secondary education merely due to the lack of their ability to get home on the weekends and/or holidays to be with family and peers. If they had that available to them via public transportation, they could do well at school, graduate and possibly bring their education expertise back to the Bruce peninsula to ... their home community." No doubt some mode of affordable alternative is needed to help our youth reach their economic potential.

Poverty reduction: Again in my travels and in my former role as deputy critic of health for rural and northern Ontario, we saw this at many stops. Anti-poverty groups have been telling for us for years about the so-called intersection of health, transportation poverty. Their advice is that a more accessible transportation system would help to reduce some of the inequalities that currently exist in rural and northern Ontario. According to the Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force, who just submitted their report to the government, we need to support the formation of this committee:

"(1) creating a vision for what public transportation in rural Ontario should look like in the future;

"(2) setting standards for public transportation across Ontario; and

"(3) determining what strategies and priorities need to be in place to make the future happen."

Furthermore, the poverty task force advises, "Best practice studies and examples of other provincial initiatives, such as BC Transit, have demonstrated the benefits of an effective rural public transportation system to increase accessibility to essential services and employment; lead to lower commuting costs for residents and fostering the development of local and regional businesses. We believe that an integrated public transportation solution connecting people and communities will lead to a better quality of life; and a more sustainable future for Grey and Bruce county residents."

This advice brings to mind the controversial report the Liberal government adopted in 2004, entitled *Small, Rural and Remote Communities: The Anatomy of Risk*. In the words of Lawrence Solomon of the National Post, "For the first time in memory, possibly for the first time in Canadian history, a prominent government panel is recommending that unsustainable rural areas in Canada's heartland be taken off life support and allowed to die a natural death."

Interjection: It's a Liberal report.

Mr. Bill Walker: That is a Liberal report, yet another report—the demise of rural Ontario.

I take great offence with the report's recommendation to pull the plug on small communities, as I do with the generalization that everything north of the GTA is on "life support"—their quotation. More importantly, I'm deeply offended that this government would actually accept such rubbish and a demoralizing attitude about rural and northern Ontario.

The future of the province lies in healthy communities, communities that put food on your table and give you the mineral-rich Ring of Fire, our aggregates and many other great commodities that support the thriving economy that we need if we're ever to be the leader of Confederation again.

Massive gas tax funds: My colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has brought the gas tax to this House seven times. Finally, after seven times—lucky seven—he finally did, but up until then, both the NDP and the Liberals squashed that bill, and that was only to bring more money back to rural Ontario for things like infrastructure, roads and transportation. You just cannot afford to let our rural communities fizzle away, nor to become non-existent. It's unacceptable, and many on this side, our caucus particularly, will not allow that to happen.

Healthy communities: There's no dispute that access to public transportation is an important component of healthy and sustainable rural communities. For this reason, the many supporters of this resolution asked me to convey to you that they're hopeful that the adoption of this resolution for an all-party rural and northern Ontario transportation committee will be the first step in achieving this goal.

This was echoed by the Southwest Economic Alliance: "The alliance has actively advocated for improvements to passenger transportation for our region.... In Ontario, our key 'ask' is the establishment of an all-party committee of the Ontario Legislature to study all aspects of passenger transportation in the region.... To date, over 35 municipalities have passed resolutions in support of it. SWEA strongly supports your private member's bill and will communicate that to all parties over the coming days"—Serge Lavoie, president, Southwest Economic Alliance.

It was also echoed by the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus, the great county of Grey, Owen Sound, Sudbury, Chatsworth, Georgian Bluffs, the town of Deseronto, the township of Nipigon, the town of Hanover, northern Bruce Peninsula, and the town of Bancroft economic development and planning committee, all of whom are certainly concerned about the lack of available rural transportation options and are eager to be part of the dialogue.

The public health office in Grey and Bruce also said, "We certainly see this as a health equity issue"—Lynda Bumstead, chair of public health in Grey and Bruce.

John Keith, manager of public transportation services at The Rural Overland Utility Transit—acronym TROUT—a division of Community Care North Hastings, repeated the same: "You have our full support for your

resolution for a rural and northern transportation committee.... TROUT public transit held a rural public transportation conference in Bancroft on November 15, 2013, and I am encouraged by the awareness and increasing understanding of the need for public transportation solutions in rural regions across the province. There was representation from 13 counties at the conference ... effective support from the province will certainly be helpful."

The Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities said, "FONOM wishes to extend resolution support for a rural and northern transportation committee at Queen's Park.... As you're aware, rural and northern communities continuously struggle with a lack of access to transportation. A rural and northern committee would address [these] communities' needs.... Public transportation issues, which are currently not meeting the needs of rural and northern Ontarians, are of great concern to FONOM—" Alan Spacek, president of FONOM.

From Ashley Farrar, social planning co-ordinator, Social Planning Council Oxford; Mike McMahon, chair, Social Planning Council Oxford; and Carolijn Verbakel, vice-chair of the Social Planning Council Oxford: "We need provincial leadership to make sustainable, affordable rural transportation a reality. We would appreciate [your] support of Bill Walker's motion."

From Mike Coxon, CEO, Mills Community Support Corp.: "Glad to support this!"

From the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, or CARP: "We recognize that transportation services in rural, dispersed communities will need subsidy, creativity and flexibility. We very much support the establishment of a high-level committee to address the transportation needs of communities such as ours." This was sent by Haliburton Highlands CARP, chapter 54.

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And from Kate Hall, Peter Minaki, Lisa Tolentino, Heather Ross, Terry Wright, and Shirley Moore, members of the Rural Transportation Options committee: "Transportation services in rural communities with low population densities will require subsidy, as do all urban transit systems. Rural communities are known for their social innovation and there may not be a one-size-fits-all solution. However, an all-party committee that is tasked with studying the issues associated with a lack of transportation services in rural communities is a welcome first step. We support the establishment of a high-level committee to address the transportation needs of rural residents in Haliburton, Kawartha and Brock, and others across the province."

"We fully support your motion": Marilyn Bird, executive director, Lanark Transportation Association.

"The board of directors of the Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition strongly supports your resolution": Lorna McCue, executive director, board of directors of the Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition.

"The Huron-Perth Transportation Task Force, I am pleased to inform you that we strongly support your

resolution for a rural and northern Ontario transportation committee": United Way of Perth-Huron.

Mr. Speaker, as I travel across the province and speak with people, again I'm reminded of my colleague Mr. Yakubuski's PMB. Finally, it's at second reading. It's in committee, and hopefully, some of that money does come back to rural Ontario and can address some of the needs once this committee is formed and can actually make some good recommendations.

People in a rural area, such as Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound or my colleague from Huron-Bruce or any of the colleagues from rural Ontario, need this travel system to be able to get to things like specialist appointments, to be able to get to job interviews, to be able to get to training, to be able to get to co-op opportunities, to be able to get to—many of our seniors are volunteers, but they need a reliable way to get to their programs.

When I've been out in the hustings, I've been talking to people like the Poverty Task Force, the United Way, the seniors' groups and youth groups, and it's heart-wrenching for those individuals who have children with special needs who need some help to be able to get there—

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: Northland railway.

Mr. John O'Toole: They've cancelled it.

Mr. Bill Walker: They've cancelled that one, yes. I mean, in northern Ontario, how do you get to Toronto, to the specialists that you need, now that they've cancelled that Northland railway? Speaker, it heartens me when I see these parents who have children who need the special access and yet there's nothing there in the way of public transportation to them. Who more than in a rural area needs these type of services? And even something as specific as the Liberals changing the way they're doing physiotherapy, moving them to more urban centres: How do these seniors get to those programs when they have moved them without—no thought process that there isn't just a subway car to jump on and do that?

It is clear, Mr. Speaker, that rural and northern Ontario need us to act now. Implementing a reliable and effective transportation system can increase the quality of life for our residents so they can travel to their medical appointments, to work, to shop, to volunteer or—you know what?—just to be able to visit family and friends, which is a huge part of people's health.

It would be sensible if all three parties at Queen's Park, and I invite my colleagues, agreed to study the demand, obstacles and feasibility for rural and northern transit. If you, like me, believe we should take a more active role in supporting our communities' transit needs and overall health and economic needs and vitality, then I ask you, each one of you in this House, to support this resolution. Vote to strike an all-party committee to study transportation needs in rural and northern Ontario immediately.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to speak to this motion today, not as someone who represents a riding in

rural or northern Ontario but as the representative of the urban riding of London West. I'm also pleased, on behalf of our party, to express support for the motion from the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

The reason that this issue is important to me as a representative of the urban centre of London is that London is very much part of a very tightly linked regional economy throughout southwestern Ontario that relies very much on a strong transportation network. London has developed an economic strategy that is focused on establishing the city as a trade and transportation hub of southwestern Ontario. London has an industrial land strategy that is focused on acquiring land to attract new businesses, many of whom are international companies and many of whom, who have already set up their businesses in London, support the agri-food industry. We know that the success of these companies relies on their having a reliable transportation network so that they can get their products to market and so that we can bring in agricultural produce to support the agri-food industry that London is developing.

The city of London, in its spring pre-budget consultation, called on the government to work with the federal government to provide regular train service to Sarnia and Windsor, and also recommended that the province explore regular transit connections to smaller centres throughout the region, including St. Thomas, Port Stanley, Ilderton, St. Marys and Stratford. All of those communities are part of rural southwestern Ontario but are important to the city of London.

As we heard during question period today from the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, the government across the way seems to have entirely focused its transportation strategy on the GTHA. We need a big-picture transportation plan that will look beyond the GTHA and that will take into consideration the well-being of the entire province, not just a few select regions.

As the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound did, I want to acknowledge the work that has been done by the Southwest Economic Alliance, or SWEA. Earlier this month in London, SWEA convened a regional transportation summit that involved about 120 stakeholders who looked very specifically at the critical issue of the limited passenger transportation options in southwestern Ontario. The purpose of this summit was to generate some co-ordinated planning, some policy recommendations that would lead to more intercity passenger transportation in southwestern Ontario. As the member pointed out, the resolution that SWEA has been circulating has already been adopted by 35 municipalities, and they are continuing their advocacy work to draw attention to this critical issue in our region.

In particular, it's not just intercity transportation; it's also public transportation that is in crisis outside the GTHA. As the member pointed out, within smaller rural centres, public transportation is almost non-existent, and that creates huge challenges and barriers, in particular for low-income people, people with special needs and the elderly, just to access health and social services, which

we know are being more and more centralized as the government looks to close health care services and bring them into major centres.

We also know that job seekers who are looking for retraining opportunities, who are looking to upgrade their educational skills, who are looking to get to employment opportunities that are available, need public transit. They need an intercity transportation network that will enable them to take advantage of these opportunities when they come up.

We also know that the province of Ontario, during the two decades from 1989 to 2009, spent only 4.3% of its total budget on transportation and communication, which is less than BC and Alberta and, with the exception of Ontario, is also less than all Canadian provinces combined. Of the money that was allocated to transportation by the Liberal government in 2013-14, almost all was for the GTHA. So other regions are not getting the same degree of attention. Southwestern Ontario, in particular, is being disadvantaged by the government's single-minded focus on the GTHA and its reluctance, or its inaction, on transportation needs outside the region.

In closing—I'm going to share my time with my colleague—I did want to again express our support for this all-party committee and, in particular, my interest in looking specifically at the needs of southwestern Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jim McDonell: A point of order.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock.

A point of order from the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you, Speaker. I just wanted to welcome, or have the House welcome, Art Buckland, who is here from the Upper Canada District School Board. He's a trustee with them and a resident of my riding. Art is a huge volunteer in the riding of South Glengarry, although he lives in South Stormont.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. The Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: It's a delight for me to be here this afternoon and provide some comments for my friend and colleague, the member of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. It should surprise nobody that I think we're in favour of this particular resolution. I think it has some merit. Investing in transportation infrastructure, of course, is critical for our rural northern municipalities, and we've come a long way as a province.

One of the reasons that I got into provincial politics—I'm a former municipal politician, a city councillor in Peterborough from 1985 to the fall of 2003—was because of the downloading. We know that the previous government downloaded 43% of all the roads and bridges and other critical infrastructure in eastern Ontario. But you don't have to take my word for it. Ask the Eastern Ontario Wardens, who are a non-partisan group who

hired their own policy analysts to come up with that number.

We do know that they've pegged that number right on, and we do know that that's a deep hole, and we're slowly digging out of it. We don't want to go back to those days. We'll continue to make investments in infrastructure right across this great province.

You know, during this summer I was out talking to a lot of municipal colleagues—good friends of mine. I recall a meeting with the wonderful mayor from Owen Sound. Owen Sound is a wonderful community. It used to be the hometown of a former distinguished member here at the Ontario Legislature, the late Eddie Sargent, one of the most colourful guys ever to serve in this Legislature. I shared with the mayor about Eddie Sargent's commitment, and of course about people who have followed in his footsteps.

It was an opportunity to talk to the mayor. She was really delighted with what we're doing in terms of infrastructure: the new \$100-million program that we put in place. She was delighted that I was out talking to them and getting their input in order for them to help shape that program that's important to every part of Ontario, but particularly rural Ontario and northern Ontario.

We've invested \$5 billion in northern Ontario highways. Not too long ago, I was on Highway 11 going into North Bay—I represented the member from North Bay. What was interesting is that on Highway 11, as you go into North Bay, there's a wonderful billboard with a picture from Nipissing on it. I thought it was a great way to welcome one to North Bay to see that introduction to that fine community.

Over the last decade, we've also built 6,700 kilometres of new roads right across the province of Ontario. Let me put that in context. That would be like building a road from Ontario to Alaska. That's important, because when you get to Alaska, Sarah Palin can see Ottawa instead of Moscow. I just wanted to make that comparison.

We've built more than 800 bridges in that period of time. That means more people and businesses in rural and northern Ontario are getting to their destinations on time in a very safe manner.

I understand first-hand about infrastructure in northern Ontario. As I said, I've been touring it. In the cities across Ontario, there is urban transit—subway, streetcars; you name it—in rural and northern Ontario, we have roads and bridges. We all take notice when we drive over potholes or can't get across a bridge in disrepair.

Just on Monday, I was in the wonderful community—I chatted with my colleague the member from Simcoe-Grey. I was in the municipality of Adjala, near the community of Alliston. I was there to announce funding for a new bridge. I went to that bridge. I couldn't believe it. It's a one-lane bridge. The rebar was all rusting; the guardrails were hit by combines because they couldn't get across. I was there with my good friend Mayor Tom Walsh. Tom and I were there on Monday to announce the funding of that new bridge that's so very important to that wonderful community outside of Alliston, Ontario.

These kinds of strategic investments are what keep rural Ontario going. Just like families who set priorities within their own budget, our government is prioritizing rural and northern transportation projects. That's why we're moving forward. Our government is providing \$100 million for infrastructure in small, rural and northern municipalities. My good friend from Wellington there and my good friend from Nipissing—every day they come across the aisle. I get along well with them. They give me their projects and they say, "Minister, we want to make sure that that bridge or road gets funded, because we know how critical that is for these communities." I want to thank them for helping me. I said to them that I'll take their wise advice under consideration, of course, as we move forward.

Ms. Soo Wong: Get things done.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Getting things done, as my friend from Scarborough-Agincourt says. I know she's the kind of MPP who gets things done each and every day.

What we're doing together is we're looking to have a permanent infrastructure fund in our 2014 budget. I say to my friends across the aisle: We're looking at that. We're consulting to see if we can put that into our budget. Let me tell you, I look forward to my friends in the official opposition and my friends in the third party to look at supporting—if that initiative does find itself in our budget.

In 2013-14, we're investing \$513 billion in northern Ontario as part of our program for Highways 67, 11, and 17. We're looking forward to developing an integrated multi-modal transportation strategy, representing the largest public and stakeholder engagement in northern Ontario and rural Ontario. As I say to my good friend from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, it's great to see that the official opposition has finally come to the party. We welcome that with this resolution.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I appreciate the opportunity to join the debate and speak in support of the motion put forward by the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. This is a very astute motion.

Before my friend the Minister of Rural Affairs gets out of earshot, I appreciate the opportunity and the recognition that you talked about in terms of crossing the aisle to talk to friends about infrastructure projects. We need good roads in order for transportation to travel on them. Maybe I'll come and visit you next week with regard to a project that I could get your help on—the Minister of Transportation as well.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Sounds like a wonderful endorsement for—

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I would thank you very much.

Again, coming back to reflect on the remarks that the Minister of Rural Affairs shared, we need good roads, absolutely, but in rural Ontario, specifically my riding of Huron-Bruce and my colleague's riding, Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, good roads are all for naught if we do not

have an opportunity to have the viable transportation needed to support our populations in our small towns and rural communities.

The motion specifically states that the government “should immediately strike an all-party committee ... to study transportation needs in rural and northern Ontario.” This is to address an issue that has long been neglected by the Liberal government. It’s nice to see that we have all parties coming to the table under the spirit of supporting this motion.

Just yesterday, I met with a delegation from the Ontario Good Roads Association. It’s interesting, the data they’ve shared. They’ve got very valid, substantiated data that shows the poor shape our infrastructure has eroded to over the last decade. It’s important to talk about transportation, but specifically in my riding, we have bridges that are going to close because the dollars just aren’t there. As a committee, it will be interesting to see the bigger vision and how this can be addressed, because again, in order to have viable transportation for people who need it, we need good, stable, open roads for all in terms of connecting small communities throughout rural Ontario and northern Ontario.

It must be stressed, Mr. Speaker, that public transportation in many parts of rural and northern Ontario is virtually non-existent. This is a major problem in my riding. I want to share with you a couple of examples. Last Friday, in my constituency office in Kincardine, I met with representatives of Contact North. It’s an adult learning opportunity. There’s an office in Kincardine as well as a Contact North office in Exeter. We talked about the bigger picture of infrastructure and support needed by people in our communities. It’s staggering how transportation has been lost on this Liberal Wynne government, because we have people who are being encouraged—and we welcome them—to live in rural communities. They’ve maybe been a little down on their luck, and they find living expenses a little easier to manage, if you will, in smaller communities in rural Ontario. But they get out to towns like Kincardine and they don’t have the public transportation to get them from one end of the town to the other. It costs a lot of money—people on OSDP or Ontario Works sometimes have to pay for a taxi to go and get their groceries and back again. These are hard-earned dollars that disappear because we don’t have public transportation.

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To make it more poignant, there are people who want to turn their lives around. They want to better themselves through education, and again, we don’t have the public transportation in small communities in rural Ontario to help these people. They’re using their scarce dollars for taxis, to get from one end of town or possibly to another community, for their adult education courses. It’s just the proof in the pudding that this government continues to not connect the dots.

Going forward, in order to have a viable solution for public transportation, we need to address the issue at a

large level, at the committee table, with all parties present, and then chunk things down and understand how the transportation issue in rural Ontario is severe, and in doing that, we need to be able to encompass and draw in our partners. There’s the Rural Ontario Institute, ROI; there’s United Way. There are so many people who can assist the all-party committee, and I truly hope that our friends take up this opportunity to bring them to the table and, as the all-party committee of this House, get to the solution in a speedy way.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It’s an honour to be able to stand up again and, this time, speak on behalf of my NDP colleagues and speak on behalf of the residents of Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Regarding the motion to create an all-party committee to look at the transportation needs of northern and rural Ontario, I’d like to state from the outset that we strongly support this motion.

We are somewhat surprised that the member put forward a motion to create a committee, because I also put forward two motions in this House, and the last one was to create an all-party committee to look at something that’s equally important in northern Ontario. It was opposed by the party to the right, and not only opposed, but derided, about how a motion to create a committee—“Make a decision” and “You’re wasting your time.”

I’d like to put on the record that I don’t think creating an all-party committee is ever a waste of time. I fully support this idea.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: You can’t have it both ways.

Mr. Bill Walker: You must not have communicated it well.

Mr. John Vanthof: We communicated very well.

There’s one thing I’d really like to put on the record. The Minister of Rural Affairs said, “In urban Ontario, we have subways, and in northern Ontario, transportation consists of roads.” There’s much more than just roads. Ontario Northland is still there. The tracks are still there, but the Northlander was cancelled on September 28, 2012—so we’ve gone over a year. At the time, we were promised enhanced bus service, and we never really bought into that because it was, again, a promise. “Enhanced,” to me, would be a bus service that people actually—because the Northlander was most important for people who needed to go to major hospitals in southern Ontario, people who couldn’t stay on—and I’ve taken the night bus a couple of times. If you’re sick, you don’t want to take the night bus, because you’ll be dead by the time you’re off the night bus. I’m not trying to make a joke.

We looked at the numbers, and since the train has been cancelled, the ridership on the bus has gone up, but the overall ridership has gone down by 10,000 in a year. In Toronto, they’re going to say, “Well, 10,000, that’s not that much.” But for northern Ontario, 10,000 people who can’t get to a hospital any other way but with the train—so, fine, they’re finding cars or they’re just not getting help. They’re not able to travel, and no one has

ever discussed that. That's something this committee could discuss. That is something that an all-party committee—and I'm hoping the party to the right is thinking the same thing that our party was thinking: By creating an all-party committee, you take the politics out of it because you've all got skin in the game. What the Minister of Rural Affairs was saying, "Well, if you support what we're saying," is the political way to do it. In the long run, when you use politics, somebody always loses, because someone's always ignored.

Something else the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound touched on and I fully agree with—I don't remember the name of the study, but I've read it, about how rural communities mean nothing to urban Ontario, and we should shut them down, and that Toronto is the engine of Ontario. I've got nothing against the GTA. Toronto might be the engine, but rural and northern Ontario are the fuel. Without the fuel, Speaker, the engine stops.

One of the reasons I ran for this position is because a previous MPP was at an event in our riding. It was a mining town, and mining was in a slump. He said, "I'm sorry, folks, but mining is a sunset industry, so you better get ready." Well, mining isn't a sunset industry. Mining goes up and down. A large part of this province, a large part of this city, a lot of the skyscrapers you see on Bay Street were built from mining. A lot of things we have in the city were built on forestry and built on agriculture. Guess where that's done? Rural Ontario. Northern Ontario.

The people who live there need transportation, and, yes, we need good roads, and we have some good roads. We also need public transportation so our seniors can get to—we don't expect to have the biggest hospitals in Kirkland Lake. But when those people have worked and built this province, they should have the ability, they have the right, to have a public transportation system that can get them to a hospital where they can perform intricate services. We have that right.

I fully support this committee. I hope that they support, in future, other all-party committees so we can actually get something done.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jim McDonnell: It's a privilege to get up to support the private member's bill from the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. It's a bill that I truly support.

We've seen a lot of cuts to rural Ontario, northern Ontario over the years. I think it's time that something is done. I look at my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, where our train service has been limited. You can no longer get a train out of here after 3 o'clock during the day. If you look at businesses trying to come to Cornwall—Toronto is the business centre of Ontario. Trying to come up to Toronto and make a return trip back is no longer possible by train. We have no airport. Bus service has been cut back. There's only one bus now even between Cornwall and Ottawa. We see that truly as an issue. I support the fact that we do need this committee to look after it.

It was interesting to hear the Minister of Rural Affairs talking about why he got involved in government. I was a former mayor of South Glengarry and the 2006 warden of SD&G. I got involved because I saw the cuts coming to rural Ontario. I go back, as mayor of South Glengarry—we received less money in OMPF funding than we did in 1999, if you can believe that.

I hear him talking about how they're doing all this support. Preliminary numbers are out, and it's hard to get them all, but in my riding of SD&G, the five townships have lost something like almost \$600,000 in funding, a cut getting close to 15%. I don't know how they read into that that it's actually encouraging and helping rural municipalities try to address their infrastructure. I had the privilege of meeting with members from Lambton county today. They were talking about similar cuts: 15% to their funding at the lower tier.

When they talked about the uploading, they said, "We looked at the uploading. It looks really good, until you try to access it and you find out that without spending your own money, you can't access about 70% of it." So the published numbers are just that: published numbers that mean nothing.

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We've seen this from this government time and time again. They blame the Harris government, but that was more than 10 years ago and they're still blaming the government. If this was really a wrong, I would have expected them to right that wrong—because I look at the taxes they've increased. Our party, the PC Party, looks at providing gas tax back to help this problem. When this government, when they brought in the HST, had a \$5-billion increase in revenue. It was a great opportunity to go back and give a little bit of money to rural territories. They never did that. I think there's lots of opportunity. I guess I have to leave time because other members will be rising on this. But there were just so many opportunities where this government could have stood up, could have helped out, but didn't. I think the people of rural Ontario are getting fed up.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I too am pleased to rise on this very important bill. I must tell you, Speaker, that if we had a committee like this in place, it would have been obvious to the government a long time ago that the fire sale of Ontario Northland was not the answer to transportation needs in the north. They went ahead and announced this fire sale, as the member from the NDP said, back in March, a year ago in March, with no thought. As it turns out, during the gas plant scandal hearings, in the documents that we received, not only was there no thought, there was actually some advice from the finance ministry and from cabinet that the message on Ontario Northland to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines was "Defer. Don't make this decision. You don't know what you're talking about. We need more information."

The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka and I took time that summer to travel 1,600 kilometres, drive

through the north and visit with all of Ontario Northland's stakeholders—all of the mayors, all of their councils and employees. We talked individually to all of these important stakeholders about what their needs were. We got to understand what the problems were. Sadly, the Liberals went ahead without consultation, without notice to any municipality, without notice to the employees, and did this. That is the most serious aspect of what could come out of these consultations.

I have to tell you, Speaker, the gas tax, as the other member spoke about, is also unfair to northern municipalities. I know. I was mayor of the city of North Bay at the time, and there were five communities in the north that have bus service, that have transit. Out of all of those communities, only the five, what we call the large urban northern municipalities, got the gas tax. There are 444 communities in Ontario. The majority don't get the gas tax because the province and the people in Queen's Park just do not get that there is such a thing as rural Ontario and northern Ontario. We don't have transit service in all of these communities. What about Chisholm, Ontario? What about Mattawa, these communities that are vital to Ontario, to Ontario's economy, that have no transit? They get no gas tax. If this committee goes through, it's an opportunity for us to at least educate the people in this Pink Palace about what northern Ontario and rural Ontario are all about.

Speaker, when you think about what just happened last week—this major setback for all of Ontario, Cliffs pulling out of the Ring of Fire—this is a \$10-billion hit to the economy, \$60 billion of minerals that won't be coming out of the ground and helping to put people to work. All of those alarm bells that we've been ringing would have been heard by this committee. That's why this committee is so important.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you to the people who have spoken to this: the member from London West, the Minister of Rural Affairs—he acknowledged Eddie Sargent, a very colourful person from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound; they seem to have a history and tradition of that, I'm told. I'm glad to hear that he's going to support it and I'm really, really glad to hear that he's talking about some significant support because the Ontario Good Roads Association was in my office yesterday talking to me about it, and there's a huge need for bridges and roads that impact transportation. What I really want is for the transportation system to be able to use all of those and, at some point, I hope they come through. He was glad that I came to the party. Well, I'm glad to come to the party. I just wish there was still some money in the bank when I got to the party so we could do that much more for the people of Ontario.

My friend and colleague from Huron-Bruce gets it. She understands the need for viable transportation in a rural area like her great riding beside mine.

My colleague from Timiskaming-Cochrane talked about the enhanced bus service and I trust that could be part of the study.

The member from Stormont-Dundas-South Gengarry, my colleague and friend—he, again, is a guy who has been in the trenches. He understands, from the municipal role that he played as mayor and warden in the past, just how significant transportation is in a rural riding.

Of course, my colleague from Nipissing, again, another former municipal mayor—thank you all for your support of this bill.

I hope it is something that we can take to get past the vote to get all-party support so we can move it to a committee and actually do something that's going to evoke some change in this province. Transportation is absolutely the linchpin in rural Ontario. We have to get people moving. It's about jobs. It's about health care. It's about children's education. It's about pure community spirit and people being able to be engaged in their communities and get out and share with their friends, their family and their colleagues. So I really hope for that.

I want to also extend a thank you to all of those groups, organizations and municipalities that sent resolutions of support. I truly hope that in a few minutes all of the parties will stand and be united in this minority Parliament and do the right thing: support this all-party committee to study a crucial need in rural and northern Ontario.

Thank you, Speaker.

LINCOLN ALEXANDER DAY ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE JOUR DE LINCOLN ALEXANDER

Mr. Arnott moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 125, An Act to proclaim Lincoln Alexander Day /
Projet de loi 125, Loi proclamant le Jour de Lincoln
Alexander.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Ted Arnott: This afternoon the Ontario Legislature has the opportunity to pay appropriate tribute to the honourable Lincoln MacCauley Alexander, a man whose political appeal crossed party lines and whose life was an example of service, perseverance, humility and humanity, which should guide us all.

I want, first of all, to thank my friends the member for Scarborough-Rouge River and the member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek for agreeing to co-sponsor Bill 125, the Lincoln Alexander Day Act, 2013. We are all privileged to serve as presiding officers of this House, working with the Speaker and my friend the member for York-Simcoe. I do not consider this to be my bill; instead, it is our bill. If passed by the House today, every member of provincial Parliament who supports it can claim some

measure of ownership and at the same time demonstrate that we can work together across party lines and recognize some timeless values that need to be recognized again and again in our time.

We worked together to show that it can be done. We can work together across party lines in this minority Parliament seeking to advance the public interest of the people of Ontario.

I also wish to acknowledge at the outset the presence in the House today of some special guests: Marni Beal Alexander, Lincoln Alexander's widow; her sister, Barbara Hotson; and Rosemary Sadlier of the Ontario Black History Society. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature today.

I believe that my remarks this afternoon need to answer two basic questions. The first question is: Who was Lincoln Alexander? The second question is: Why should the Legislature recognize the date of his birth, January 21, and enshrine that recognition into law?

I received many messages of support for Bill 125, but I want to start by quoting Dr. Alastair Summerlee, president of the University of Guelph, who knew Linc from his many years as chancellor of the university and called him "perhaps the most admired and respected public figure in Ontario." I agree, as I cannot think of anyone else who could be considered the province's most revered public figure.

All of us who were privileged to meet and know Linc have our own special memories, and I want to share one of mine with the House. Lincoln Alexander was the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario when I was first elected to the assembly in 1990. When he would come into the chamber here at Queen's Park for a throne speech or other special occasions—sometimes to give royal assent to a bill—he had a bearing and a manner that ironically seemed to be both regal and down-to-earth at the same time.

1530

But it was his sense of humour that endeared him to everyone who knew him. As chairman of the Ontario Heritage Trust, he visited Wellington county in the summer of 2008 to help unveil a historical heritage plaque at Glen Allan, recognizing the Queen's Bush settlement, which was a community of 2,000 black settlers, many of whom were escaped slaves who had come to Canada from the southern United States via the Underground Railroad.

"Good afternoon, Your Honour," I said, as I greeted him.

"They said there would be some big shots here," he replied.

I smiled, protesting that I didn't see myself as a big shot.

He said, "All you MPPs think you're big shots."

We both laughed, remembering that he too had been a parliamentarian and so, by his own definition, was a big shot himself.

Lincoln Alexander grew up in an Ontario that was far less tolerant and inclusive than the province we know

today, but as Sandra Martin wrote last year in the *Globe and Mail*, he had the capacity to turn "rejections and despicable slurs into a personal challenge to excel."

Excel he did, as a student, as a veteran of the Second World War, as a young professional, as a husband and father, and as a community leader, culminating in his election to the House of Commons as a Progressive Conservative in 1968—no small feat during that Trudeau-mania election.

Supported by his late wife, Yvonne, his son, Keith, and daughter-in-law, Joyce, he held his Hamilton riding through the next five elections, becoming Canada's Minister of Labour in 1979. Retiring from partisan politics in 1980, he served as chair of Ontario's Workers' Compensation Board, now called the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, and then represented Her Majesty the Queen as our Lieutenant Governor here in Ontario.

Next, he became the longest-serving chancellor of the University of Guelph, inspiring thousands of young people with his life story and example of overcoming discrimination, pursuing excellence and working for a better Canada.

If I were to read the full list of the committees, commissions, clubs and boards on which he served throughout his life, it would take up the entire 12 minutes of my allotted time, the list is that long.

A few minutes ago, I quoted Dr. Alastair Summerlee, president of the University of Guelph, and I also must recognize the importance of our local university in the development of Bill 125.

This past September, I was invited to a community breakfast at the university. During his remarks at the event, Dr. Summerlee thanked the university staff and community partners, and spoke about the year ahead. He mentioned that a new statue was going to be unveiled soon at the university. I immediately thought to myself, "Maybe it will be a statue of their former chancellor, Lincoln Alexander."

I must admit, I was initially a bit disappointed when Dr. Summerlee went on to say that the statue would not be one of Linc, but instead would be a statue of a gryphon, the university's symbol. But after I reflected on it, I thought that the Oxford dictionary's definition of a gryphon, "a fabulous creature, with an eagle's head and wings and a lion's body, combining the traits of intelligence and strength," fit Lincoln Alexander to a T. No wonder he was the longest-serving chancellor at the U of G.

While I was driving back to my constituency office after the event that fall day, just before the House commenced its current sitting, it struck me that I should introduce a bill to honour Lincoln Alexander. When I started to look into it, I was reminded that former Hamilton-area MPP Jennifer Mossop introduced a bill similar in principle to Bill 125, which passed second reading in 2007, just before she retired as an MPP.

Members will recall that she chose not to run again in the election that year so that she could spend more time with her family. But she has written me in support of Bill 125, saying, "I am delighted to know that Linc may yet

have his much-deserved day! He was an extraordinary human being. He was fully at ease in his own skin, and he made all those whom he met feel the same. What a gift!"

I know she wanted to be here today, and it would not be right if I didn't thank her now for her role in the evolution of Bill 125.

Our next step was to reach out to Linc's family. Amazingly and coincidentally, Linc's widow, Marni Beal Alexander, told me that she had been reaching out to Hamilton-area members of Parliament over the summer, asking if one of them would advocate for the establishment of a Lincoln Alexander Day in the House of Commons.

Marni is here today. She has written a beautiful message in support of Bill 125, and I'd like to share it with the House at this time

"Dear MPPs:

"It has been my hope and intent that the acknowledgement of Lincoln on Lincoln Alexander Day would become the platform where discussions in schools could take place on so many, many different levels.

"I know that the teachers welcome any reason to celebrate being Canadian with their students, and sometimes the school boards, with good intent, miss some fundamental opportunities for their students to learn.

"A Lincoln Alexander Day puts a face to the special day in his honour. It is our honour, really ... we who were so inspired by him, who experienced the enormous pride of province and country when in the same room as he.

"Lincoln was truly one of a kind, and one of the last. There will be no more Lincs. No one is even close."

"Be it learning how Parliament works; What is a university chancellor, anyway?; Why is a Lieutenant Governor necessary and how does he or she affect us on a daily basis are all wonderful questions that will lead to classroom discussions and projects that might not have taken place had we not acknowledged this great Canadian.

"Inspired teaching inspires, and this is what Lincoln did for us in all nationalities, races, sexes, religions or lifestyles.

"These are all questions that beg the designing of a program, especially in the elementary grades, so that the children can truly appreciate and understand what a Canadian is and why people from so many countries far and wide want to come and live with us. Why Ontario? As I said, there are many levels to the question of Lincoln Alexander.

"So how do we solve a problem like our Lincoln?

"I think we know the answer. Give him his day. Give his day to us. Let the children 'link' with their history and their pride in country through Lincoln. It will be a very special gift."

Thank you so much, Marni, for this special tribute to the man we all admire and who you knew so well and loved unconditionally. Thank you.

A few years ago when I was working on a bill to recognize August 1 as Emancipation Day, the day slavery

was abolished in the British Empire—which was, incidentally, the very first bill ever introduced in this Legislature co-sponsored by MPPs from different parties—I came to know Rosemary Sadlier, the president of the Ontario Black History Society. Dr. Sadlier provides extraordinary leadership in this province, and the Black History Society aims to foster public interest and encourage interest in black history through education, oral history, publications, research and encouraging the leaders of tomorrow. We know that Black History Month is each February, and recognizing January 21 as Lincoln Alexander Day will allow the Black History Society to organize events that lead into all that they do in February to remind us of black heritage and history and the outstanding contribution of the black community to the country and province we know and cherish today.

I want to inform the House of Dr. Sadlier's support for Bill 125, and she writes: "The life and contribution of the Hon. Lincoln Alexander provides a connection to numerous areas of Ontario life: He was born in Toronto and excelled, despite some challenges, as a new Canadian; he moved to Hamilton to raise his own family; he served in the military, in the Royal Canadian Air Force, during the Second World War for four years, beginning in 1942; he attended McMaster University, then Osgoode Hall Law School. He steadfastly ran for public office, being elected in 1968—the first black MP—by 1979, he was the first black cabinet minister (labour). The Honourable Lincoln Alexander served as Lieutenant Governor from 1985 to 1991—the first African-Canadian vice-regal in Ontario."

"I urge you to provide your support to this initiative, not necessarily because of the political stripes of the individual being honoured, but because of the meaningful tapestry of the numerous connections his life managed to touch and the impact that his birthday being marked as Lincoln Alexander Day would have on black and all Ontario residents."

One of the treasures of my home library is an autographed copy of Linc's memoir, *Go to School, You're a Little Black Boy*. The title comes from his mother, Mae Rose, who used those words to inspire her son to embrace the opportunity of public education as the vehicle to success to life. One of the last chapters of that book is entitled, "A Lifetime of Fighting for Racial Equality." The whole book details, in a matter-of-fact way, the many incidents of racism, subtle and overt, that Linc overcame during his life. But that chapter shows that even though we've come a long way in our efforts to build a society that is devoid of racism, where people are judged not by the colour of their skin but instead by the content of their character, we know we still have a long way to go.

He wrote: "Racism is simply a product of ignorance, but I am an optimist and I've seen great strides taken towards eradicating that evil. We need to look to the future while we pick up the torch from those who went before us."

Madam Speaker, let us pass this bill today as a tribute to this great Canadian, and as a statement that this House

absolutely condemns racism, intolerance, prejudice and bigotry in all its forms, wherever it still exists. And no matter what your race, creed or colour, Ontario—our Ontario—is your home.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: It is with enormous pride that I stand here this afternoon to speak about Linc, Lincoln Alexander. Just a year ago, we celebrated the life of Hamilton's favourite son, the Honourable Lincoln Alexander, who passed away at age 90 on October 19, 2012. I want to thank the MPP for Wellington—Halton Hills for taking the initiative to bring forward the bill proclaiming Lincoln Alexander Day in Ontario on January 21 each year. More personally, I want to thank him for asking me to be a co-sponsor of Bill 125, a tremendous honour for a lifelong Hamiltonian who has heard of Linc Alexander for most of his life.

1540

I had the privilege of meeting Linc on numerous occasions, and yes, he did invite everyone to call him Linc. He was, in every way, an approachable, down-to-earth good guy. For those of you who had the experience of meeting him, you know how he made you feel like the most important person in that room. His mere presence and attention to you elevated you above all others, an inspiring feeling that lingered for a long time.

Although born in Toronto, Lincoln Alexander was a committed Hamiltonian. “[Hamilton] is the greatest city in the world,” he once said. “It’s all about the people. I have great faith in them. They are a strong and resilient people.”

Lincoln Alexander fought in World War II with the RCAF. He was well-educated, a lawyer by trade and the first black politician elected to the Parliament in Canada in 1968, representing Hamilton West, the same riding that was represented by Sir John Strathearn Hendrie from 1902 to 1914. Hendrie also moved on to be a Lieutenant Governor of Ontario from 1914 to 1919.

In 1979, Linc was appointed as Minister of Labour, making him the first black cabinet minister in Canada. After 12 years in the House of Commons, Alexander resigned his seat in an emotional farewell.

Then he continued his work for the people of Ontario by accepting the appointment of the chair of the Workers' Compensation Board. Once again, he was the first black person to hold that position.

But as we've already heard, he wasn't finished wowing us yet. Linc became the first black Lieutenant Governor of Ontario in 1985, Ontario's 24th Lieutenant Governor, the first member of a visible minority to hold that office. In fact, he was the first member of a visible minority to hold a vice-regal post in all of Canada.

As Lieutenant Governor, Alexander's focus was on education and youth. During his term, he visited more than 250 schools across this province. At each school visit, Alexander would advise students to pursue their education. This is a message his mother, as was said by the member from Wellington—Halton Hills, relayed

throughout his childhood. She would say, “Go to school, you're a little black boy,” a phrase he used as the title of his memoirs in 2006.

As the first black chancellor of the University of Guelph, he held the position longer than any other predecessor. He continued his string of firsts when he was appointed the first black chair of the Ontario Heritage Trust.

A good education and public service are the hallmarks of his trail-blazing legacy, something for every person, young or older, to strive for and achieve. His interest in and respect for our heritage was evident in his everyday life as a role model for young people of every colour and race. The Lincoln Alexander legacy is more than how he made you feel after a one-on-one encounter with him.

It's going to be an experience for so many students when they learn about him in their schools. They'll learn not only about his love of our heritage, they'll learn that February is not only when we celebrate Heritage Week, but the whole month is designated as Black History Month and has been since 1926 in the United States.

Historica Canada Black History Canada says on its website: “African-American Carter G. Woodson conceived the idea of having a time set aside devoted to the African, and African-American history that blacks were learning on their own. He chose the week in February that contained the birthdates of two people he credited with bringing about the end of American slavery, President Abraham Lincoln and black abolitionist, Frederick Douglass, which” back then in 1926 “he called Negro History Week.... The celebration expanded and over time became known as Black History Month.”

Historica Canada Black History Canada further states: “In Canada, this idea was first celebrated in Toronto by railroad porters within the black community by 1950; the porters had learned of it on their travels in the United States.... It was not until the Ontario Black History Society (OBHS) was founded in 1978, and petitioned the City of Toronto by 1979 to have February proclaimed Black History Month that the celebration started to trickle into the entire community. The OBHS has successfully lobbied the federal government to have February declared as Black History Month. In December 1995, the Parliament of Canada officially recognized February as Black History Month, following a motion introduced by the first black Canadian woman elected to Parliament, the Honourable Jean Augustine, MP of Etobicoke—Lakeshore.”

While all this was going on, there was Lincoln Alexander, setting the example and breaking down barriers everywhere. In 2011, Lincoln Alexander reflected on the evolution of equality through his lifetime and named Canada the best country in the world with respect to race relations. He acknowledged the country's immense progress over the years and took great pride in being Canadian, but made sure to remind people that it's still not perfect. As a young man, he witnessed and experienced various forms of racial discrimination, but most often noted the lack of job opportunities and career

options acceptable for minority groups as particularly frustrating.

During the Second World War, Alexander served as a sergeant in the Royal Canadian Air Force, for which he was decorated. After the war, he received his undergraduate degree at McMaster. In 1948, he married Yvonne Harrison, to whom he was married for 50 years. Yvonne predeceased him in 1999. They had a son, Keith, who is married to Joyce. They have daughters Erika and Marissa. In 1953, Alexander continued his studies at Osgoode Hall school of law and was called to the bar in 1953.

Even though he was academically well qualified and a man of impeccable reputation, Alexander's applications for work were rejected at many established law firms. Most of us can't even understand how the rejection must have felt, but Alexander returned to Hamilton and rather than quit or let himself be held down, he moved ahead. He made history in 1955 by becoming the first partner at Canada's first interracial law firm, Duncan and Alexander.

Continuing his upward trajectory, in 1962, Lincoln Alexander moved on to a new law firm: Millar, Alexander, Tokiwa and Isaacs—no relation to me. In 1965, his exceptional merit and contribution to the legal profession were recognized when he was appointed as a member of the Queen's Counsel.

Throughout his life, Lincoln Alexander set a very high standard of good citizenship. He was an exemplary role model, one who so completely deserves to have an act of this Legislature declare January 21 of each year as Lincoln Alexander Day.

Folks, he will be missed by all Ontarians, particularly by those Hamiltonians and others who had the privilege of meeting and knowing Lincoln Alexander. Linc, you'll be missed but never forgotten. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): Further debate?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased—

Interjection: Madam Speaker.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Madam Speaker; my apologies.

I am pleased to be asked to co-sponsor Bill 125 to proclaim January 21 in each year as Lincoln Alexander Day.

First, let me say thank you to the family members who are here, and especially Rosemary Sadlier from the Ontario Black History Society for joining us.

I would also like to thank my colleague MPP Ted Arnott for bringing forward this bill and for his hard work in resurrecting a proposal of a private member's bill by our former colleague MPP Jennifer Mossop, and I want to thank him for asking me to co-sponsor it.

Lincoln MacCauley Alexander served as the first black member of Parliament, the first black cabinet minister as Minister of Labour and the first black Lieutenant Governor of Ontario.

Mr. Alexander, a war veteran, served in the Royal Canadian Air Force during World War II. He completed

his bachelor of arts at McMaster University before attending Osgoode Hall Law School. After practising law for some time, Mr. Alexander decided to pursue politics and was elected in 1968.

After exiting politics in 1980, Mr. Alexander served as chair of the Ontario Workers' Compensation Board, known today as the WSIB; Doctor's Hospital; Shaw Festival; the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair; chamber-Works! ensemble of Hamilton; the Raptors Foundation; and the Ontario Heritage Trust.

He was also the chancellor of the University of Guelph, where he's recognized with a building named in his honour. He has been recognized with several honorary degrees, the honourable Lincoln Alexander award program, three elementary schools named in his honour, as well as the Lincoln Alexander expressway in Hamilton. In addition, Lincoln Alexander was named the greatest Hamiltonian of all time in 2006.

We are most grateful for his advocacy on behalf of young people and his dedication to strengthen education. He was guided by his mother's lesson that "accepting defeat was easy, but success was possible, and education was the vehicle to take you there."

1550

His Honour Lincoln Alexander has a legacy in my riding. Femi Doyle-Marshall and Kwesi Johnson, black youths from Scarborough—Rouge River, are recipients of the Lincoln M. Alexander Award. This award is an important representation of His Honour, considering his commitment to education, youth and multiculturalism.

I had the opportunity to serve as the city of Toronto representative on a provincial committee to review Caribana festival operations, which was chaired by His Honour. From my personal experience, he was a compassionate man who always looked out for others before himself. The commitment and respect that he brought to his work throughout his illustrious career validated that he was truly a wonderful representative of the people, a true Ontarian and Canadian. We should be proud to celebrate his life.

A day to recognize these achievements would allow every Ontarian and Canadian, especially those in the black community, the opportunity to understand how the Honourable Lincoln M. Alexander overcame all the challenges in life to strive for what he believed was a better Ontario and a better Canada.

Bill 125 will further commemorate his outstanding achievements and triumphs by declaring his birthday, January 21, Lincoln Alexander Day.

Speaker, it is my honour and pleasure to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): Yes. The member from—I just want to get this right, sorry—Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm very pleased and honoured today to speak on the proposal to name a day, brought

forward by all three parties in the Legislature—Ted Arnott, Paul Miller and Bas Balkissoon—An Act to proclaim Lincoln Alexander Day.

Now, we've all heard that Lincoln was a remarkable Ontarian. Born in Toronto in 1922, Lincoln Alexander hadn't always thought he was destined for politics. He was dedicated to serving the people of Canada. He was first elected MP for Hamilton West in 1968, and subsequently re-elected four times until retiring in 1980. As has been said, he was the first black Canadian to be elected as a member of Parliament, as well as the first to serve as a cabinet minister.

I want to also welcome the family today, and say that at that point—I was a young child—I had my first interaction with Lincoln Alexander. It was because when Lincoln was elected, my father, Bill Scott, who was a member of Parliament for what was then Victoria-Haliburton, was his first seatmate. So, as a child, I would get these phone calls. My dad would pass the phone, and he would say, "It's Santa Claus." That booming voice would come out, and, of course, it was Lincoln Alexander. So he's always been very important in our family's life.

When he decided not to run again for Parliament, he certainly did not leave public life. When he was appointed in 1985 by Brian Mulroney as Lieutenant Governor here in Ontario, he did not forget the interaction he had with our family. He came back to the village that I and my dad's family are from, Kinmount, and opened the Kinmount Fair as Lieutenant Governor. That was a big moment in a very small town. I'm very emotional today. I apologize for that.

Of course, the list of accomplishments goes on: Officer of the Order of Ontario, Companion of the Order of Canada and, to top it all off, in 2006, the Hamilton Spectator named him the Greatest Hamiltonian Ever. So I'm very happy that Mr. Miller has spoken today on the remarkable trailblazer that he was throughout his life.

For the small girl from Kinmount who first was introduced to Lincoln Alexander as Santa Claus on the phone, I want to say it's an honour to speak today and certainly in support of naming the day as Lincoln Alexander Day.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: First, I want to thank the members from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, Wellington-Halton Hills and Scarborough-Rouge River for bringing this very important bill forward. The proclamation of January 21 as Lincoln Alexander Day is a wonderful acknowledgment of an extraordinary life, of an exceptional human being.

The Lincoln Alexander expressway cuts right through my riding of Hamilton Mountain. We know it as the Linc, just as we know and remember the great man himself. What a fitting nickname because it's so much more than a simple short form of "Lincoln." The highway connects one end of the riding to the other and it forms a good chunk of the highway that connects one end of Hamilton to the other. It links us together, just as our original Linc did.

He connected people. He connected communities. He connected ideas all across Hamilton through his many years of dedicated service to our community. He was our link in more ways than one. That service earned him the title of the greatest Hamiltonian of all time by Hamilton in 2006. We were proud to share him as he took his character, his compassion, and his significant skills beyond Hamilton's borders.

Linc came to Hamilton as a young man, taking a job as a machine operator to be close to Yvonne, a young woman he had fallen in love with and would later marry. They were together until she died in 1999. After serving in the RCAF during the war, he returned to Hamilton to study at McMaster. His mother had instilled in him the importance of going to school. Stelco turned him down for a sales job. They said customers wouldn't want to deal with a black man. So he went to law school: Stelco's loss and definitely our gain.

He had overcome the many racial barriers of that time to get to this stage. He was already a trailblazer, but he was only just beginning. There were so many trails ahead and he blazed through them all. As a young lawyer in Hamilton, he and a few of his colleagues established a law practice that celebrated ethnic diversity. For 12 years, he was a member of Parliament for Hamilton West. He was Canada's first black MP and he felt honoured to represent our city in Ottawa. He said that we were the greatest city in the world, and I for one would definitely agree with that.

In Ottawa, he served for a time as the Minister of Labour, becoming the first black cabinet minister in Canada. After a spell as the chair of the Workers' Compensation Board, he was appointed as Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, the first member of a visible minority to hold such a position anywhere in all of Canada. As the Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable Lincoln MacCauley Alexander remained as Linc despite the trappings and the pageantry of his position. He never ever put himself on a pedestal. He considered himself a person no different than those of us that he served.

Education and youth had always been important to Lincoln. Again, going back to the words of his mother, as we have heard, Go to School, You're a Little Black Boy was the name of his autobiography. Well, he had gone to school, and at 6 foot 3 inches, he wasn't so little anymore, but he still cared deeply for education.

I am definitely not going to have enough time; jeez.

Later in life, Lincoln again fell in love, with his wife, Marni Beal, in 2011, and she made his final years so much happier for him in life as she stayed with him. Through his life, he received so many awards, as we have heard quite directly in the House already this morning.

Lincoln Alexander died on October 19, and he will be missed but he will definitely never be forgotten. It all started on January 21, 1922. Today, I hope all members will join us in supporting this bill to mark his birthday, January 21, by proclaiming it as Lincoln Alexander Day.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak of an old friend. I knew Linc very well; we spent a fair bit of time together. I'm pleased to join in the recognition, even the adulation, that we're expressing today.

When he passed away in October, his granddaughters remembered him simply as a true human being with flaws and perfections. While Linc's heart belonged to Hamilton, he served on behalf of his entire province and his nation. He was not hemmed in by the prejudice of others, nor the expectations of his time. He demonstrated that every individual part of our being informs who we are, but it does not define who we are, and that if we believe in our own abilities, our potential has no limit.

1600

As a man, he was more than the sum of his parts. Now, as a memory, he is a symbol of the service that we must all endeavour to offer.

Speaker, Linc was a friend. So was Arthur Weisz, who died in October. Lincoln Alexander and Arthur Weisz used to joke with each other about being the two finalists for the "greatest Hamiltonian of all time" award. By the way, that is an important distinction because a lot of great people come from Hamilton, right? By any measure, they were two outsiders: the first black member of Parliament and the Holocaust survivor. But they both became beloved citizens and achieved true greatness and loved each other.

I have three vivid memories of Linc. I was a second-year university student when he was running for re-election as a Conservative member of Parliament. I went to the all-candidates meeting to support a friend of mine, Peggy Leppert, whom Mr. Miller probably knows, who was running for the NDP. During the debate, Peggy fainted, and without a second's hesitation, Linc bent down, scooped her up in his big arms and carried her off to receive medical attention, then came back to join the debate and completely decimated the Liberal candidate.

Some years later, I was a young politician myself, sitting beside Linc at a dinner. I wasn't scheduled to speak, but the organizer stopped by my chair and, as a courtesy, asked if I wanted to say a few words. I said, "No, thanks. It's not my place to speak." Linc grabbed my arm, squeezed it tight—he was a strong man—and I remember he said, "Listen, my young friend, when someone asks you to speak as an elected official, you never say no; otherwise, you're disrespecting them and their invitation." An important piece of learning for an early-30's kid, right? It was wise counsel, and I took his advice.

I knew Linc best, however, as a patron of the Burlington Teen Tour Band. One Christmas celebration, the organizers were waiting to get started and frantic because they couldn't find Linc. He was supposed to be on stage emceeding the event. I said, "I bet I can find him." I headed into the kitchen, and there he was flirting with everybody, all the cooks and all the volunteers. He was a very generous, genuine and compassionate man, truly a great Hamiltonian, and I continue to miss him still.

We give thanks for his life. Marni, it's good to see you here.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I consider it a great honour that I have today to stand to support Bill 125 and recognize the importance of Lincoln Alexander. It is undeniable the wondrous impact Lincoln Alexander has had. He once said, "Anyone can become a great part of the Canadian way of life and make a difference economically, politically and socially."

"Don't get sucked in by saying you can't because there's always a future in this great country of ours if you work hard and stay in school."

Many people have referenced similar quotes made by him, but I think it really is emblematic of the man and the kind of person he was.

He first distinguished himself as a fighter pilot during the Second World War. Following the war, Lincoln Alexander went on to become the first African Canadian partner at a law firm. He continued to serve this country as the first black MP and cabinet minister and as the first African Canadian Lieutenant Governor in Canada. To add to this list of outstanding achievements, he was the longest-serving chancellor at the University of Guelph.

His election to the House of Commons in 1968 helped inspire all those around him at a time when the civil rights movement was at its peak in the United States. His place in Canadian history is only matched by his love for our shared heritage.

As many of you already know, he was the chair of the Ontario Heritage Trust from 2004 to 2010, and it was in this role I had the opportunity to meet him on several occasions. He said, "The Ontario Heritage Trust is extremely important to me because we have to understand our cultural, natural and built heritage and make sure people preserve and respect and look after it." Being a former history teacher, it was a great honour for me to speak to him about the important role the Ontario Heritage Trust plays in preserving our history for the generations to come.

I admired both the passion and eloquence that he brought to the role of chair. His contributions to the Ontario Heritage Trust have truly helped raise the profile of its efforts and the importance of preserving our history for future generations. His successes were so widely appreciated that the trust established a legacy fund in his name.

Speaking and meeting with him, it was clear to see how his presence inspired the enthusiasm of those he met. He remains a compelling example of how a man from humble beginnings was capable of becoming a leader the whole country admired. His remarkable contribution set the standard for generations. Bill 125, An Act to proclaim Lincoln Alexander Day, is a testament to a man who will forever be remembered in the hearts of those he has inspired.

I would like to commend the member for Wellington-Halton Hills for taking on this initiative, as well as the

members from Scarborough–Rouge River and Hamilton East–Stoney Creek for working together to create this tripartisan bill. It is with great pleasure that I give my support to this bill and recognize our two guests here today in recognition of the importance of today's bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): The member from Scarborough–Guildwood.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I stand today in strong support of Bill 125, An Act to proclaim Lincoln Alexander Day. This bill would establish January 21st in each year as a day to honour and celebrate the late Lincoln Alexander. It is so wonderful to see that Marni is here, as well as Ms. Rosemary Sadlier, the head of the Ontario Black History Society, to hear these tributes on behalf of Lincoln Alexander.

Lincoln Alexander was a remarkable Ontarian and a great Canadian. He was a true trailblazer. To echo my colleague's statements today, the list of firsts in his name is quite remarkable.

To name a few of these firsts: the first black member of Parliament; the first black federal cabinet minister; the first black Lieutenant Governor; and the first person to serve five terms as chancellor of the University of Guelph. As the bill itself states and his long list of accomplishments illustrates, "His life was an example of service, determination and humility."

His commitment to education, equality and community service left a lasting mark on Canada, and his legacy continues to inspire young people today. Last February, I judged an essay-writing competition for Black History Month at RBC. One thing really resonated with me after reading all of the essays submitted by the students: the importance of having role models like Lincoln Alexander in the community. He truly inspires the community at large, and in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood, where there are a large number of black youth, this is really important. It is especially important for them to hear about and be inspired by the accomplishments of someone like Lincoln Alexander. He is an example of how education can help you rise above circumstances you were born into.

This lesson and his message about education are a vehicle to equality. It's one that many youth still need to hear today. To paraphrase Lincoln Alexander, youth today need to hear it is not their duty to be average, but it is their duty to set a higher example for others to follow. They need to hear about people who have set that example, like Lincoln Alexander, and they need to hear that they too can set higher examples for themselves.

Kathy Grant joins me here today. She is in the members' gallery. She started the Legacy Voices project, which is dedicated to preserving and documenting black Canadian military history and service. She has seen firsthand the impact that Linc has had on students and youth.

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One speech really resonated with her. She says a young girl spoke about Lincoln Alexander and said the following: "I found him to be an excellent example of how challenging yourself to test the limits of your poten-

tial can actually surprise you with incredible success and leave a lasting impression on those around you."

I can say that his energy and dedication to serving his community have made him a role model and an icon for me and so many in my community, especially in my role as a member of provincial Parliament.

Linc's commitment to serving his community has spanned an entire life, from enrolling in the Royal Canadian Air Force in World War II to sponsoring a cadet group which today is serving in our community. I got a chance to meet them this Remembrance Day. That's why this bill is so important. We need to be reminded each year of Linc's legacy. We need to be reminded that we must continue to work hard towards the ideals of tolerance and inclusivity. We need to be reminded that there is still work to do to achieve this equality here in Ontario.

Mr. Alexander said, when reflecting on his own life, "How many of those things I touched on still need attention today." And when we take a quick look around even this chamber, we know that there is more work that we need to do. We need to be reminded that education is the most essential tool that we have towards achieving our goal of more equality and inclusivity in society, so it is my sincere hope that my colleagues today will see the importance of Bill 125 and support the establishment of January 21 as Lincoln Alexander Day.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): The member for Wellington–Halton Hills has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: No, there's still time.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): Oh, I apologize.

Further debate.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: It is my great honour to rise today to speak to Bill 125, An Act to proclaim Lincoln Alexander Day, and I'd like to recognize Linc's beautiful bride, Marni Beal Lincoln, there in our west lobby. I'm grateful to my colleague from Wellington–Halton Hills for bringing this bill forward, as well as his co-sponsors from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and Scarborough–Rouge River.

The Honourable Lincoln MacCauley Alexander was one of the most accomplished Ontarians of our time and perhaps any other. When he passed away on October 19, 2012, at the age of 90, he left behind a life filled with accomplishments that would serve as a beacon to others. He was the first black member of Parliament, the first black federal cabinet minister, the first black Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, and much, much more.

But for all his historic accomplishments, the thing that magnified the stature of Lincoln Alexander most of all was his absolute humanity. Linc was a man of the people who was generous with everyone he met. As far as Linc was concerned, we were all his constituents. He was a wonderful citizen as well as an exceptional public servant, and while he is rightly recalled as the trailblazer for minorities, he didn't care to be called the "black MP." He would tell reporters that he much preferred to be

called the MP who was prepared to stand and speak on behalf of anyone who suffered prejudice or injustice. Linc once revised the old saying that hell is other people to better reflect his heartfelt world view. He believed that heaven was other people.

Watching him move through the room at any of the countless events that filled his social calendar, nobody could doubt his sincerity. I hold fond memories of Linc's 90th-birthday celebration at the Burlington Music Centre, hosted by the Burlington Teen Tour Band. He served as the teen tour band's patron since 1999. Linc also served as chancellor of the University of Guelph for a record five terms.

I first met Linc at the graduation of my eldest daughter, Jennifer, from the University of Guelph. The ceremony was held outdoors under a tent, and despite the shade, the temperature was roasting. There were a number of speakers, and with each one the crowd grew more restless. And then Linc spoke. His incredible presence—his words, his voice, his bearing—took everyone out of the moment. We totally forgot the heat.

Linc was a deeply dignified man, and he understood very well the gravity of public service. He is remembered still and always will be deeply loved because he saw the best in others and inspired them to do likewise. He was honest, he was forthright and he was true, a man of integrity who was never afraid to speak the truth to power; a man who lived openly, yet who had the capacity to surprise and delight others. His life, his long and glorious life, continues to offer us instruction in how best to live, how to unlock the best in ourselves, how to uncover the best in others and how to achieve greatness together. It is fitting that we, in this Legislature, honour this great man with a day that bears his name, and I am so happy to support this.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): Further debate.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Everybody has got a story about Linc Alexander and what a great guy he was. My story about Linc Alexander is from one night at Flamboro racetrack. Charles Juravinski and his wife, Margaret, and Lincoln Alexander were at a table. We enjoyed a wonderful evening watching some fine horseflesh run in what I believe was the Canadian cup. Linc, of course, regaled us all night long with stories of events that had taken place in his life and how he felt so proud that he was able to give back so much to Ontario, which had given him so much over his life.

He was truly an absolutely remarkable individual. I think every Ontarian who ever met him and many Ontarians who never met him think the world of him. That's the kind of person who is so rare and yet so valuable to a province. Linc personified that to everyone who met him.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): The member from Wellington–Halton Hills on a point of order.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'd like to seek the unanimous consent of the House to allow me to divide the two

minutes of time that I have to sum up this debate with my colleagues who have co-sponsored the bill, the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and the member for Scarborough–Rouge River, so that we each have equal time.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I want to express my appreciation to all the members who spoke this afternoon to Bill 125 and all of those who plan to support it. I just want to briefly read the conclusion of Linc's book, his memoir. It's very touching. He said: "When I get to heaven ... I await a glorious reunion.... And there will be my mother, who I know will meet me, and she'll tell me I've done well. Because I went to school, this little black boy."

Today, the Ontario Legislature speaks with one voice, and we say to the Honourable Lincoln MacCauley Alexander: Well done.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank all the people who spoke about Lincoln Alexander. We're very proud, in Hamilton, of Lincoln Alexander and all of his accomplishments and the way he treated Hamiltonians and his love for our city. Special thanks to the minister for his kind words and for his personal experiences with Lincoln Alexander over the years; that was really good to hear.

I'm thrilled that all three parties came together on this. It's a good thing to do and it certainly honours a man who is more than deserving of this special day that we'll cherish in Ontario for the rest of our lives.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Let me say thank you to my colleague from Wellington–Halton Hills for encouraging me to join him in co-sponsoring this bill. I want to say thank you to everyone for the comments they made about Mr. Alexander, because he's truly a Canadian who—we will all cherish the memories we have of him, and I'm so proud to have had the opportunity to work with him on the Caribana committee. I want to say: Linc, thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

CAPPING TOP PUBLIC SECTOR SALARIES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE PLAFONNEMENT DES HAUTS TRAITEMENTS DU SECTEUR PUBLIC

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): We will deal first with ballot item number 61, standing in the name of Ms. Horwath.

Ms. Horwath has moved second reading of Bill 136, An Act to cap the top public sector salaries.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We will deal with this vote after we finish the other business.

Fife, Catherine
Forster, Cindy
Gélinas, France

Marchese, Rosario
Miller, Paul
Natyshak, Taras

Singh, Jagmeet
Taylor, Monique
Vanthof, John

RURAL AND NORTHERN ONTARIO TRANSPORTATION

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): Mr. Walker has moved private member's notice of motion number 51.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

LINCOLN ALEXANDER DAY ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE JOUR DE LINCOLN ALEXANDER

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): Mr. Arnott has moved second reading of Bill 125, An Act to proclaim Lincoln Alexander Day.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

LINCOLN ALEXANDER DAY ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE JOUR DE LINCOLN ALEXANDER

Mr. Arnott moved third reading of the following bill: Bill 125, An Act to proclaim Lincoln Alexander Day / Projet de loi 125, Loi proclamant le Jour de Lincoln Alexander.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1622 to 1627.

CAPPING TOP PUBLIC SECTOR SALARIES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE PLAFONNEMENT DES HAUTS TRAITEMENTS DU SECTEUR PUBLIC

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): Members, please take your seats.

Ms. Horwath has moved second reading of Bill 136, An Act to cap the top public sector salaries.

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Balkissoon, Bas
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Chudleigh, Ted
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
Duguid, Brad
Fedeli, Victor

Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Hoskins, Eric
Hunter, Mitzie
Jackson, Rod
Jeffrey, Linda
Kwinter, Monte
Leone, Rob
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Matthews, Deborah
McDonell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McMeekin, Ted

McNeely, Phil
Milloy, John
Munro, Julia
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
O'Toole, John
Pettapiece, Randy
Sandals, Liz
Scott, Laurie
Sergio, Mario
Wilson, Jim
Wong, Soo
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 18; the nays are 39.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT ACT

(LEAVES TO HELP FAMILIES), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI (CONGÉS POUR AIDER LES FAMILLES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 19, 2013, on a motion for third reading of Bill 21, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family caregiver, critically ill child care and crime-related child death or disappearance leaves of absence / Projet de loi 21, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne le congé familial pour les aidants naturels, le congé pour soins à un enfant gravement malade et le congé en cas de décès ou de disparition d'un enfant dans des circonstances criminelles.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): Further debate? The member from Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for acknowledging me this afternoon, as it is always a pleasure to rise in the House to speak on all important issues but particularly Bill 21, the Employment Standards Amendment Act, which deals with family leave. A family leave care act is how it's referred to.

I will say from the outset that there's no question this debate has received full scrutiny from this Legislature. Most of us have had the opportunity to speak on it. Most

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.
Bisson, Gilles
DiNovo, Cheri

Hatfield, Percy
Horwath, Andrea
Mantha, Michael

Prue, Michael
Sattler, Peggy
Schein, Jonah

of us have spoken on it in support of the need for a mechanism to allow family members to provide care for their families and loved ones who are in medical distress, who are facing treatment or who simply need some measures of care.

When the bill was originally proposed—actually, this is the second incarnation of the bill. The bill was previously introduced by Minister Jeffrey, who was the then Minister of Labour; it died on the order paper, I believe, last fall. But here we are again, and it has been amended, thankfully, to improve the bill. It's one of those positive aspects of the work that we do here. We scrutinize a bill. We give it full consideration, and then send it to committee and try to strengthen the bill. I'm proud that some good work has been done to make sure this bill is flexible and responsive to the needs of the people in the province when it comes to delivering care to their loved ones.

Speaker, I'm so glad to see so many people in the House. It's incredible that at this late time of day there are so many people. You must be all enthralled and just waiting with bated breath to hear what I have to say about this bill.

I do, of course, think it is a positive step. It's a small step, but it is a positive step. In my discussions and comments on this bill throughout the months and times that I've had the ability, I think I've referenced some of my own personal stories about how this type of bill would have affected or would facilitate my family in particular—and I think it always strengthens the debate to put a personal tone on it.

Currently—maybe I'll start with previously. In 2005, my brother Edward was injured in a mountain biking accident in Nelson, British Columbia. He was alone on his mountain bike, went down the mountain, fell off his bike and broke his neck and now is a high-level C7 quadriplegic. In 2005 here we were, a family based in Ontario—my mom, my dad, my sister, my brother and my other brother, Eddie, out west. He really had no family out there. Of course, within hours, my mom and dad were on their way to Vancouver General Hospital to see him and to be with him. They stayed there for six or eight months actually post-injury, to help him transition from being able-bodied to, now, the situation that he's in in being quadriplegic.

You know, there's no way that he could have gotten through that. It's unimaginable that someone could do that alone. Of course, our health care in this country, thanks to universal health care, pioneered by the famous New Democrat Tommy Douglas, who is revered and renowned and loved around the planet, really, for his delivery of universal health care—my brother did not incur one single medical bill. The treatment of that type of catastrophic injury, Madam Speaker, I couldn't imagine—actually I have seen some bills that have come forward for our friends south of the border in the United States who have suffered catastrophic injuries such as a spinal cord injury. They are in the hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of dollars that people have to suddenly

come up with to be helped and to receive care. Thankfully, Eddie did not have to do that.

He was a health and fitness professional, and I'm proud to report that today he continues to be a health and fitness professional. He trains elite athletes—snowboarders and mountain bikers. He's got an incredible amount of knowledge, in terms of health and fitness, but he's also an inspiration. You're not going to quit doing a push-up, you're not going to give up, when a guy in a wheelchair is yelling at you saying, "You can do one more rep." So a shout-out to my bro Eddie, who is kicking butt out in BC.

Again, it's because of the support that our family was able to give to him, and his community around him, that wonderful community of Nelson, British Columbia, who rallied around one of their wounded warriors and supported him. His friends in that community continue to help him in his endeavours, and I'm sure it's a reciprocal relationship, because he's so inspirational. That's one aspect, just one out-of-nowhere freak accident that touched our family.

I will tell you again that my aunt, Patti Brenner, who is from Vernon, BC, the youngest of 14 kids on my mom's side of the family—my mom is one of 14 children—was diagnosed with breast cancer two years ago. She was diagnosed with breast cancer and had a mastectomy two years ago. The cancer recurred—it came back just recently—and now she's going through quite intensive radiation and chemotherapy treatment in Vernon. She's there with her loving husband, Norm—a shout-out to Uncle Norm—but it's just them.

Once again, my mom has sprung into action. She has left Ontario to be with her youngest sister to provide loving, caring support for her sister as she goes through this treatment. She has also been joined by another sister, Aunt Sue, from Oakville, who is also out there. So, Patti's got two of her sisters there, helping her, bathing her, changing bandages, helping her with her medication, just helping take her mind off of it—just to be around a loved one.

At about noon, I gave a call to my Aunt Patti—actually, I was hoping to talk to my mom, because I miss her. But I spoke with my Aunt Patti. She answered the phone, and she was in great spirits. She's so touched. It's been four months now that my mom has been out in Vernon. She's so touched; she's so amazed that she has this support network around her with her two sisters being there during her treatment, who are not going to leave her side, who are dedicated to seeing her fight this and get through this. She's so touched; she called them angels. She told me today, "Taras, if they wouldn't have come, if they had not been here with me during my treatment, I would've given up, because it's so hard."

Anyone who has gone through cancer treatment themselves, anyone who has been a survivor, anyone who has seen a family member or a friend go through cancer treatment knows how difficult it is. It's one of life's most enormous challenges; all the more reason to have loved ones around you to support you and to facilitate your care

and successful treatment and recovery. That's what we all hope.

That's what our system is built upon. That is the principle of universal health care: If you get sick, although we may not know you, although we may not be a family member, we are all pooling our resources to make sure that everything in our capacity is done to make sure you get better without financial burden, without hardship to your family. No one should profit from anyone's illness or injury, and that is a fundamental belief, I think, of Canadians. It is certainly one of the pillars of the foundation of the New Democratic Party and it is one principle that I and my colleagues will defend to the end of the earth, because it is humanistic. It's the essence of being a living, breathing sapien that we help each other, that we care for each other, that we do everything we can.

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I think that's what Bill 21 acknowledges: that we are better off when we have our loved ones around us. It facilitates our rehabilitation and it gives us hope. It gives family members hope that they're not alone. So I wholeheartedly endorse the bill, its impetus and hopefully its positive effects.

At the nucleus of the bill, although I've spoken about health care, it's actually a labour bill because it deals with the fact that any one of us would, I'm certain, jump at the opportunity to help one of our loved ones, but reality sets in, in that we all have careers and jobs and things to do. It is difficult for someone to arbitrarily take a leave or take a day off or a week off from work to provide treatment. There was no protection prior to Bill 21 built into the Employment Standards Act. Therefore, what theoretically could have happened is, had my mom been working—thankfully, she is retired, and I'll say proudly that she is retired as a 35-year worker from the General Motors trim plant in Windsor, where she received a wonderful wage, benefits and a retirement package because she was a unionized worker in an automotive plant in downtown Windsor.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: God bless.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes, God bless. For sure. There's no way that she could—actually, if she didn't have the benefits of her job and her retirement plan right now, I don't think she could afford to take that leave to care for her sister Patti right now, or, for that matter, to have cared for my brother Eddie.

But the point is that, theoretically, prior to Bill 21, or as it stands right now, someone who is working would have the need to provide care for a family member, and that employer could deny that leave, could say, "You know what? Sorry about your luck. Sorry about your family. We apologize that one of your loved ones has come down with a chronic or terminal illness, but we can't let you go. There's no room for that. And if you do want to go, we're just going to have to let you go forever. You'll no longer be a part of this organization."

I think it's difficult for any one of us to imagine that there would be an employer that would be callous like that. I generally think the people around me are caring,

understanding individuals. It really would be, I imagine, a rare circumstance that an employer would be so not understanding and not caring about one of their employees' need to provide care for their family member. But, of course, we do know that there have been instances of that.

This Bill 21 is the remedy to that situation, because what it essentially does is it provides unpaid job-protected leaves of absence to provide care or support to certain family members who have a serious medical condition but are not at the risk of death. We know that there is federal legislation on the books that provides for protected leaves of absence for public sector workers when the scenario is dire, when the family member is at imminent threat of dying. This one allows us to leave our workplaces to provide—initially, it was to provide blocks of weeks of care. Essentially, the employee would request a leave of absence to provide care for an elderly loved one or anyone, really, who was diagnosed or identified as having the need for support. That presented a problem. As we debated this bill throughout the House, we really identified, and I think the government came to the conclusion that yes, in fact, it was a little bit prohibitive in the sense that sometimes family members don't quite need a full block, a full week of time to provide that care. Sometimes it may actually simply be an afternoon. Sometimes it may be to take a family member to a doctor's appointment. Sometimes it may be to administer eye drops or medication. Sometimes it may be to change bandages or just to check up on somebody because there's no one else in that family, because, as we've all acknowledged, I think quite universally here, someone who is a family member providing that care and support and comfort is ultimately more holistic and something that has more value than simply an intake worker.

Personal support workers do great jobs, and they have a deep connection with, ultimately, their patients. They develop close relationships and intimate relationships where they really, truly care for their patients. But there is nothing like a family member. There are certain emotional connections there that go beyond the patient-caregiver dynamic.

I think, again, that's a point of this bill that is being acknowledged here. It's one that fills a gap that we know is looming in terms of our demographic, where Ontarians are getting older. We're living longer, be it with maybe some more complex health care issues, but, nevertheless, we are living longer.

What that means is that we're going to need to be taken care of, ultimately. Someone is going to have to be there, or something is going to have to be there to help us along the way. It certainly is a comforting aspect to know that in this province, we can be progressive, we can be proactive in anticipating that the best people to initiate that care are the ones around you: your loved ones, your family and friends.

Again, the concept of the bill is one that has—in my time in this House debating the bill, I've only heard a real consensus around the need and support for the bill. I

believe it will certainly pass, and I believe it has been strengthened at committee.

I'll read a couple of aspects that have been changed.

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes. New Democrats and Tories initiated these changes at committee, one of which I had already referred to in terms of portioning off those blocks of times and allowing caregivers to take smaller chunks, that being days at a time, and making it, therefore, more responsive and more flexible to the needs of the patient, of the family member. So New Democrats and Tories teamed up to amend the bill to strike out the requirement that the leave only be granted in week-long periods.

I will mention, though, that Liberal members protested at committee that the change would be difficult for employers to implement—fair enough. Yes, I can understand that it might be difficult for an employer to say, “Yes, you can leave tomorrow at noon,” rather than, “You can leave tomorrow at noon for a week at a time,” when the employee only needed an afternoon. Would you rather them leave for an afternoon, or have to take the whole week off?

I think the government came to the conclusion that, yes, those who are going to take advantage of this are going to need it to be flexible, and that's what we want also. We want a bill on the books that actually is functional, something that's not just going to sit there and be a feel-good bill. We need it to be responsive, and we need it to address the issue, fill the gap. We saw that that amendment at committee was one way to do that.

Another way that it was changed was initiated by the PC member from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, who argued that changes to those folks who authorize the sign-off—a medical practitioner—should be more flexible; not simply a doctor initiating that sign-off, where they identified that the patient, the family member, was in need of medical assistance, was in need of care. I guess I'll read it: Randy Hillier argued that in remote parts of the province, sometimes all residents have access to, on a day-to-day basis, is a registered nurse. So now the bill allows physicians and registered nurses or psychologists, under the laws of the jurisdiction in which care or treatment is provided, to sign off that a patient requires family care. That's another really good improvement to the bill, Mr. Speaker. It's a really good improvement, and it's the work that we do here each and every day. It's the reason we're here, right? It's to take a bill and make it stronger.

1650

It's interesting that it didn't come to the table as strong as it is now. You would wonder—Liberals are notorious for studying and forming committees and contemplating having discussions.

Hon. David Zimmer: Getting things done.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: We're the ones who get results, as we did in this bill.

But it's a wonder why the bill didn't come to the floor fully nuanced, with all the bells and whistles that we know it could have had.

We hear, Mr. Speaker, that the government is complaining that we've debated this bill ad nauseam. I may not disagree with that. We've had full debate. I almost want to say “fulsome” debate, but Peter Kormos would be throwing things at me if he heard me say the word “fulsome,” so I would never use that word. We had full and complete debate.

But we had to go through that debate. Evidently, we had to go through that debate to get to the point to bring it to committee to convince the government that these were amendments that needed to happen, that needed to be implemented to strengthen the bill, and maybe make it more responsive and proactive and, ultimately, something that benefits the province. So that blows their argument out of the water, I say—full stop. And I don't hear any disagreement from the members of the government.

Speaker, one of the aspects of the bill that I think has not been addressed and one that has been punted down the road—as many important issues are when it comes to actually effectively dealing with the problems of the day—is the fact that there is no aspect of financial assistance attached to this bill, as in other bills that are in the same vein: employment insurance, disability support and other mechanisms where we have social safety nets. This, I think, is one of them. It is a social safety net in so many ways.

But the government has, I guess, assured us that they'll take up the discussion in terms of financial support through employment insurance or some other mechanism with their federal colleagues. So what the government is saying is that we're going to talk to the federal labour minister, and we'll see if the minister is willing to support this program with some measure of financial assistance to help with family members who are taking that leave. It's to help them with gas money or to help them with transit money, just the small things that make it a lot more cost-effective than if you, as a government, are going to have to pay for support workers or, God forbid, more complex health care down the road if it isn't delivered by a family member. So I see this as being something that is actually cost-effective in that light. The discussion around financial support is that, yes, our federal friends—once they get the decks cleared with everything happening in the Senate, once they figure out who is spying on who, once they figure out all the other issues that they have regarding where the pipelines are going and who is going to benefit from that—will help us out with our issues.

But actually, in terms of priorities, we hope that they help us with the Ring of Fire development first, because we're counting on them to come in and make this thing happen, because we can't go it alone.

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Oh, yes, and when it comes to retirement security, the feds are going to step in. They're going to support us there as well in terms of enhancing the CPP.

Interjection: Housing.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Oh, housing. That's when we're going to finally make headway, when we have a partner at the federal level.

Friends, colleagues, members of the government, I tell you: Give it up. It's not going to happen with our Conservative friends at the federal level. You guys might have relationships. They might have lots of backyard barbecues that they go to and they can hobnob and talk about these things, but it is not going to happen at the federal level. I urge you, in the words of the illustrious leader of the Progressive Conservatives: Take bold action. Go it alone on this. Attach a little bit of money to it, just enough to show that this is a priority. "We believe in families. We believe that family support is the way to go. We think we can help. We can find money."

Hon. David Zimmer: Bold action.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I urge you to take bold action. Don't count on Stephen Harper to come to the rescue. The cavalry is stuck in the mud. They're stuck in the Senate. They're not coming.

Speaker, I don't know if I've wavered from the debate. You haven't interrupted me, but I'm pleased to continue.

My point is that this could have been a complete mechanism to deliver this level of support—and I believe it will ultimately be precedent-setting. There are no other jurisdictions that have this in this level, because it deals with family members who are not in imminent threat of dying. It's a caregiver act for those who have serious medical conditions.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's better than a kick in the teeth.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's better than a kick in the teeth, but not as good as a trip to the dentist, I guess.

What I think is that we could do this. We could find the resources to do this. People ask me each and every day in my constituency, my wonderful riding of Essex, "Where has the money gone?" It's vaporized.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Corporate tax cuts.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Well, there's corporate tax cuts. But literally, they called it Project Vapour. It was \$1.1 billion that went to gas plants. You wonder if a fraction of that could have been allocated—and it's easy for us to say. It's easy for us here in this chamber to imagine a billion and a half dollars just sitting there that they were going to waste somewhere. Well, we could have told them lots of places to spend it; we certainly could have. We continue to do that, especially when it comes to health care delivery. When you poll residents of our respective communities and ridings, it's number one. They want to make sure that their health care system is safeguarded, provided for, maintained and also enhanced. They want to know that the system is effective and efficient. They want to know that there's actually oversight, unlike what we saw at Ornge—that there's actually somebody steering the ship. They want to know that we're actually making headway in dealing with chronic diseases.

I've got an idea for you, Speaker. We've got an epidemic in terms of diabetes in this province—many of us have met with the Canadian Diabetes Association—yet there is no comprehensive strategy for us in this province, through our Ministry of Health, to actually combine the resources around research and development to cure the disease. We never talk about that. No one in this House talks about curing diseases, especially chronic diseases. We talk about delivering better standards of care, we talk about best practices, but in the province of Banting and Best, the co-discoverers of insulin, which was one of our proudest moments in this province, one that saved the lives of millions of people around the world, I would think that it has come time for us to realize that we can do better than just treating people; we have to eventually start to cure people.

I'll tell you, if I was a member of government and if I was the Minister of Health, I would see that as quite an economical way to go. I would see that the money put into research and development, not only just to keep treatment going—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I hope you're going to tie this to the bill soon.

1700

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Well, it's health care-related. I guess what I'm saying is value for money, cost effectiveness. When you spend a little bit of money, Speaker, is my point—when you spend money in the right positions and situations, then you get downstream benefits and effectiveness and efficiencies in the sense that it costs you less.

So, again, Speaker, if I may revert back to the notion that, imagine if we cured type 1 diabetes, which is insulin-dependent diabetics—

Ms. Soo Wong: Speaker, a point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Scarborough—Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is not talking about Bill 21.

Interjection: Yes, he is.

Ms. Soo Wong: No, he's not—not about juvenile diabetes, nothing to do with it. This—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

The member for Essex, and I would ask you to tie this into the bill quickly.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: So I would imagine, Speaker, that some family members will be delivering care to patients who have diabetes, because it's a chronic disease, and for the member to stand and to suddenly acknowledge that she's trying to pay attention is kind of ignorant.

My dad is a type 1 diabetic. My father, Boris, is a type 1 diabetic. He was diagnosed at 19 years old. Please, honourable member, stand up and try to interrupt me as I talk about my dad being a type 1 diabetic. And guess who provides care for him? Our family. He's 73 years old. At some point in his life, he will need us to take a larger role in his care, and I hope it's well into his 100th

year. I absolutely do. He takes a proactive approach on his health. He exercises. My colleagues here have met my dad. They know he works out every day. He takes vitamins; he takes care of himself. He's doing everything he can do to lower the costs on our health care system, and we're talking about costs—

Ms. Soo Wong: Good.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes, it is good; it's excellent, it's wonderful. It's a part of the debate. I look forward to you standing up and sticking to the lines here, my dear, because it is frustrating—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member to withdraw, and if I could ask you to speak through the Chair.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I withdraw, Speaker. Maybe it is my fault. It's an emotional issue, because we're talking about family members delivering care to other family members. That's hopefully what this bill will facilitate, and I'm picturing how it will impact my own life. I think it's beneficial for us to do the same thing as we contemplate the ramifications of this bill and how it will work and how it won't work. That's our job. It's our job to scrutinize and criticize the benefits and potentially the pitfalls of the bill, and it's difficult to do that without bringing in some personal stories.

I apologize that maybe I brought it a little bit too close to home, but I think it's important that we all understand that it goes further than simply allowing somebody to take a day off work. It really has an incredible impact on the families that are going to be affected and that are currently affected, and I think it's incumbent upon us to do all that we can do, even if it means our getting emotional about how we can do better, and we should challenge ourselves about how we can do better in this House. That's a part of the debate here generally on a whole host of issues, but particularly when they're issues regarding life and death, as they sometimes are, and this is an issue about health or illness.

That being said, Mr. Speaker, I have indicated my support for the bill. I have indicated that I think the work that has been done at committee, through New Democratic members as well as members from the PC caucus that put a lot of thought and effort into it, that fought as well, that stood on some pretty hard principles that this bill could be better and have never really given up—this is a government bill, and we could have easily taken it on face value and moved on to our own respective agendas. We all have our own bills that we'd like to see move forward. But it's about making sure that we give it the full scrutiny that it deserves and that the people in our province deserve. It's why they sent us here on their behalf, and I feel that, at least on this bill, we've done a pretty decent job.

I look forward to hearing from all members of the House about how this enhanced bill will affect, maybe, members of their family, members of their community. I think that it's one that ultimately adds to the host of support mechanisms that this province can deliver and

that people in the province expect us to deliver, to be constantly working on, whether it be enhanced employment insurance, disability supports or injured worker supports. There are lots of ways we can continue to help lift people up and support them, not peg them down.

It's an encouraging time in the House where we can talk about a positive bill, one that I think doesn't really wedge anyone. It's not built on ideological lines—there's no question about that—but when it first came to the House, it was not enough, as we've seen with so many other bills that have come before us. It was not enough. It wasn't made to fully address the issue. It was made more to work around the edges and the fringes.

Maybe that's the benefit of a minority government, Speaker. Whether we all have to do more work and we all ultimately end up taking the credit—I know that my friends on the government side—it doesn't matter who takes the credit for it, as long as we get something done.

I'm proud that this will be one measure, ultimately, that we can go back to our ridings and say we helped. We actually produced something at the end of the day that I think will be effective for families.

It doesn't allow us to rest on our laurels, however. It's something that we should be always aware of, that there are ways and areas for us to identify, whether it be within our Employment Standards Act or our health care system that we need to provide enhanced support.

For instance, even in Windsor recently, we had a threat to our thoracic cancer services where people who were facing treatment would have been forced to travel to London to seek that treatment and they would have needed—but they rose up. They rose up when that threat was levied against them by Cancer Care Ontario. They rose up like something I've never seen before in my community. We are a blue-collar community. We're used to rallying together.

It inspired us, and it inspired me, to understand that we can never stop working and fighting for delivery, for effectiveness, and for good, quality services to come out of this province. It's something that we should strive for, and it's something that, through the measures of this bill, I think, all members have been committed to.

I want to end my remarks, Speaker, by thanking you for the time and thanking the members for their undivided attention as I end my portion of the debate. I look forward to hearing from my colleagues in the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I'm very happy to speak on Bill 21, the Leaves to Help Families Act.

First of all, I want to introduce some guests that we have in the east lobby: Amy Yan, Kate Li, Cristin Napier and Sumi Shanmuganathan—Sumi, I'm sorry if I pronounced your last name wrong; they're here from the Heart and Stroke Foundation—and as well, on behalf of the Canadian Cancer Society, Ontario division, Florentina Stancu-Soare and Nicole McNerney; and on behalf of the ALS Society, Eleanor Leggat.

I just want to urge the opposition to support this bill and to pass this so we can make it into law, especially in

light of the short time we have before we break for the Christmas holidays.

I hope we can get everyone's support for this very, very important bill, which is all about compassion, the one word that summarizes and accurately reflects on what the meaning of this bill is about.

I hope we can get everyone's support so that we can make this bill, finally, into law.

1710

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I really did appreciate the member from Essex's comments, and I believe he made the point that he was emotionally and passionately involved.

He did explain the bill, that caregiver leave was important to families. I do admire the fact that he talked about his brother, who is quadriplegic from a bicycle accident. Thanks for bringing the real story of his life here and relating it to what members are trying to do: the right thing.

Often, the right thing is the right politics, quite frankly. I think that trying to relate to things, sometimes, from the notes we're often given does not serve the purpose of the bill with the kind of emotion that we have the privilege of representing here—not just our own families, but the people of Ontario, that we have the privilege to give voice to. It's in that context that I do admire your remarks.

I would say that the bill itself—I think you made the point as well that it really isn't costing Premier Wynne one red cent. In the committee, they did raise the issue that you're required initially to take the whole week off if it was to take your father to treatment at a hospital. You have to take the whole week off. Not only that, you're losing the income and not getting paid, because it's unpaid leave.

I think that sometimes they did try to switch it over to blaming the federal government, under some unemployment rules. But the amendment is now, I understand, that you can take one day at a time, but it will count as a number of days. That's an appropriate amendment, I think, that was made in committee.

I know that the member himself, in his two-minute remarks, has made a positive contribution to the debate on Bill 21, and I appreciate it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I really appreciated the personal stories that my friend from Essex brought into this debate, because it speaks to the importance of the care that family members provide, and the need to have that care built into our lives in some way. In this regard, the bill is progressive. The point about the care is that it provides hope when people are there, especially family members. It provides recovery; it provides hope and wellness, and that's a big part of what the bill does.

But there are limitations, and that's what the member from Essex spoke to, that the Liberal government doesn't ever seem to quite get, because they go halfway and they

never go the extra step. Mercifully, they provided some amendments that made the bill a little better.

The point of flexibility is a useful one, because sometimes it may not be a week that someone needs to take from work, but perhaps half a day or a day. That's just as good to the employer, not to have the employee missing for a whole week, as it is for the employee, who might not need that whole chunk of time. Building in the flexibility, I think, is good for everyone: the employer and the family.

But the limitation is that sometimes you may find an employer who may not give you the time. While the law permits it, it doesn't mean that it's easy to do, because an employer can be very, very powerful, and powerful enough to dissuade you from taking the time off.

The other point that my colleague and friend made is that it's unpaid care, and this unpaid care is usually taken by women, who already have a stressful life to begin with. When care needs to be provided, it's usually women who have to find the time to provide it and take time away from work to do that.

The amendments were useful. It would have been better if it went further, but what can you do?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise to speak in support of Bill 21, the Leaves to Help Families Act.

I appreciated the member from Essex sharing his story with us today. I remember he shared similar stories with us when we took up the debate in the second reading debate. I appreciate those stories, because each one of us in this House has those stories about family members who went through some critical incidents or constituents who went through those critical incidents. It's about time our government talked about supporting families. As we know, by the year 2030—the population is aging. We will depend on family and significant others, who will be there to support us. The bill is not just about supporting families; it's also about being compassionate.

The bill, if it passes third reading, will recognize the importance of family, job security and ensuring workers' jobs are being protected while they are looking after their loved one. Yes, I heard the member from Trinity-Spadina say that unfortunately the bill does not allow for being paid for those days off. But I know from my constituents—they have said to me many times—they're more concerned that they have a job to go back to after looking after their loved one, because many times, their jobs have not been protected while they look after their sick loved one.

The other thing is, we have also heard that a number of agencies out there, such as the MS Society, the Parkinson Society, the Alzheimer Society, the Canadian Cancer Society and the caregiver coalition, all support Bill 21.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, we all have a job here at the Legislature. We're here to support Ontarians, making sure families are strong and making sure families are protected, especially those who are looking after a sick loved one.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Essex, you have two minutes.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I want to thank all the members who added their comments. Also, I want to mention to the member from Durham, thank you very much for acknowledging that we all add so much more to debate when we add our own personal stories to it. We all are given talking points and bullet points on a variety of bills that come before the House, but people tend to tune out when you revert to being a talking head. So I try not to do that. Especially on an hour lead, I try to bring it home, bring it down to earth. I think that people connect on a deeper level with politicians when they do that. You've got to be a normal, average, everyday person to realize how bills in this House affect people who don't have the privilege of standing here and listening to the minutiae.

With that being said, I hope my comments added a little bit more of a personal flair to it, a little bit more of a connection to how we see, how I see how it could impact other families who are in this situation. I think it's a positive step forward; I really do. I'll be proud of the bill once it passes third reading, and I will promote it through my constituency office to members of my community who I think might benefit from it.

But ultimately, I'd love to see the financial supports, because we know that that provides, possibly, one of the greatest limitations. We have fantastic employers in the province of Ontario who are understanding and caring, who know and have maybe even been in the same situation themselves, who have had to care for family members—easy to understand and let employees go and deliver that care, but somebody has to be there to fill that gap, especially when we know that it's an unpaid leave. I am fearful that the take-up of this bill will be limited because of that limitation.

Nevertheless, I will support the bill and I hope to see it pass very soon.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rob Leone: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to start by seeking unanimous consent to stand down our lead.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Cambridge has requested unanimous consent to stand down their lead. Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Rob Leone: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know our critic will have some time to add further to this debate.

I want to begin my comments today by addressing what the member from Essex was saying in his comments today. I also agree with the member from Essex that the debate in this Legislature is enriched when we bring in the personal experiences that not only we have as MPPs, but also those personal experiences that we hear from our constituents. At the end of the day, part of the vibrancy of our parliamentary democracy is based on the notion that commoners—which is what we all are: citizens of this great province—come to this Legislature to bring forth their perspectives, particularly from their own communities, to shed light on them and bring them

forth in a manner in which we can consider them when we're talking about policies that are going to affect people right across the province. It's only through that debate, through that perspective, that we gain a greater understanding of what we need to do in this Legislature.

1720

I wanted to start off by thanking the member for Essex for sharing his stories about his family in this Legislature. I remember not too long ago—maybe within the last week or so—the member from Essex actually elaborated on some of the stories about his brother in BC who succumbed to a very, very tragic bicycle accident when he was going down the mountain. If you have some time to spend with the member for Essex, you should talk to him about the inspiration that his brother is, I know to him, but it should be an inspiration to us all. He has really kept going. I don't think there's anything that's going to stop this guy, and it truly is a story that I think everyone should hear and be inspired by.

Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the PC caucus and, obviously, my constituents in the riding of Cambridge to talk about the family caregiver leave act. I do that with a great deal of enthusiasm. I realize that we have been talking about this bill for a very, very long time, and it's not that we've spent hours of debate—although we have spent hours of debate talking about this very issue—but the length in time in terms of calendar days has been quite significant. Part of the reason for that, of course, is that we had a little prorogation that got in the way of dealing with this bill in a more expeditious manner.

So it's very important, I think, for all members of the Legislature to understand that while I know there is some degree of urgency that the member from Brampton West had expressed in his comments to the member from Essex, I think it is incumbent upon us to give this bill fair consideration because of the implications that it has for families right across the province of Ontario.

I'm also going to share some stories today because, as the member of Essex has said, I think it does shed some light on the debate that we're having in this Legislature about this particular piece of legislation. The first story I want to talk about—I happened to be invited by Gordon Milak, who is the CEO of our Waterloo Wellington CCAC. He had asked me to join a caseworker for the CCAC in Waterloo Wellington on a home visit to talk about, and to experience, exactly what the front-line workers are doing in providing home care for our elderly, but also to understand the patient needs. While we have talked at great length about investing greater amounts of money into home care, it's the stories that I heard from talking to that family that I think can enhance the debate of this particular piece of legislation.

I met a gentleman. His name is Donald. I believe his wife's name is Kaye. I didn't have that in my calendar, so I couldn't remember exactly what his wife's name is and, obviously, to protect privacy I'm not going to say their last names, because I haven't asked to talk about them. But Donald is an 83-year-old diabetic, and as an 83-year-old diabetic, he obviously has some challenges. He's still

fairly mobile, but he realizes that his mobility has decreased significantly.

One of the things that Donald is experiencing right now is the potential infection that he has on one of his toes. This infection on his toe is, obviously, of great concern to Donald because, if they can't keep this infection managed in an appropriate way, amputation is a likely result. It's not simply amputation of the toe that would actually occur in his case, but he would have amputation right up to his knee. So it's very important for Donald to have the kind of care that is necessary for him.

Now, the primary caregiver in Donald's case is his wife, Kaye, who is retired, so she's, obviously, very able still. She still has the strength and the wherewithal to be the primary caregiver for Donald. But there was a situation that occurred not too long ago, and is consistently occurring, where Kaye is trying to get some medical attention of her own. What that means—when she's going to get some testing, for example, because she is facing some other health issues—is, she's going to have to leave Donald by himself for long periods of time. The question then becomes—because home care is only in the home for half an hour or an hour a couple of days a week or three days a week or four days a week—how does Kaye get the medical attention that she needs when she has to go get it? She's having a procedure done—actually, she probably had the procedure done in the last week or so. She had to spend the whole day at the hospital. The question then becomes—she is faced with a scenario where she needs to seek medical attention for herself, and she has her husband, whom she's primarily caring for—who is going to be able to help Kaye on that day? Their children don't live very close to their home; they don't live in the city of Cambridge. So what has to happen is that they have to plan for somebody to come from a great distance—not that great a distance; I mean, it's certainly more than an hour's drive—they have to provide the time for one of their kids to help them in this situation. Mr. Speaker, that is part of the issue here. They're actually expressing to me that they didn't have that capacity to have a family member come—but in the event that it's a possibility, maybe this bill will allow a family member to take a day off work, to take a couple of days off work to ensure not only that Kaye gets the proper attention she needs, but that her husband, Donald, is also well cared for while Kaye is temporarily unavailable due to the procedure that she has to have.

It's those kinds of situations that I know members of this Legislature have brought up time and time again, through the debate on this particular piece of legislation, which we've been talking about for practically two years. It has been a long time. I understand that this is an important bill, and we probably will all have some degree of satisfaction when we see this passed. Ultimately, I think we all can accept some degree of satisfaction when this does happen.

As the member from Essex has suggested, it probably is something we're going to talk to our constituents about, because this is an issue about supporting families.

Families are the building blocks of society, and we should do everything we can to support their strength. Strengthening families is certainly an important priority for us.

I know that during the debate of legislation, we have, as the member for Essex has suggested, talked about personal stories in our families. I realize that the debate often does turn into some of the prevailing issues that we see in our health care system, and that is obviously part and parcel of what we're dealing with. Certainly, that's one of the reasons why we need this piece of legislation: because there are holes that can only be provided, in many cases, by family members within our households—our children, our offspring, our grandchildren, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews. Wherever you can find some help, obviously you're going to take it.

Particularly as people get older, some of these concerns become much more prominent in their lives. My grandfather suffered a series of strokes before he passed away shortly after I was elected in 2011, and that required our family to find a way to make sure that he had the proper care. I know this is a situation that many families right across the province face, particularly when your grandmother, or grandfather, in my case—in families right across the province, where that person's primary language isn't English or French, it often is difficult to find medical services. It adds a layer of complication to the whole pyramid of what people are dealing with. In order for my grandfather to have proper care, he required one of his children to be present to translate for him. That all takes time. That all takes time away from what their children are doing, and if they're gainfully employed, as all his children were—it was very difficult, sometimes, to find the help for that period of time, where the children could help with the grandparent, get the care that they need to understand the situation that they are in. We see those situations in our homes and in our families right across the province, and I think it's a true testament to the bill that we can actually care for, particularly, new Canadians who perhaps don't speak English or French. We have to understand that there are also complications with the provision of their care that hopefully this bill can account for.

1730

My wife's grandmother is currently suffering from dementia. I know how dementia actually has a significant impact on families as well. You're always worried when you have someone who is suffering from dementia. You're always worried about whether Mom or Dad is safe. "Do we need to be doing more? Are we considering how many people are coming by to make sure that when they are in their own home suffering from dementia, they are actually safe?" This requires a degree, again, of coordination by siblings or by children of these parents who are suffering from dementia, because we want to ensure to the greatest extent possible that Mom or Dad or Grandma or Grandpa is in a safe environment.

So again, we're talking about some of the issues that we're dealing with regarding people's health and how

that relates to this piece of legislation, how we can help people help folks who are particularly in need. So I think it's very pertinent to bring those personal stories to the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, one of the saddest days, I think, in one's life is when you hear stories that actually affect children. Thankfully, my children are healthy, but when friends come up with stories of some very terrible things that are happening with their children, it certainly pinches the heartstrings. When children are diagnosed with terminal cancer, it becomes very, very difficult for people to cope with. I think this bill obviously does a good job of accounting for the parents' need to be caring for their child, particularly with such a nasty disease as cancer.

I realize that section 49.4 creates such an opportunity, and I'll just read the explanatory note on this: "Section 49.4, which creates critically ill child care leave, is added to the act. Under section 49.4, an employee who has been employed by his or her employer for at least six consecutive months is entitled to a leave of absence without pay of up to 37 weeks to provide care or support to a critically ill child. Entitlement to critically ill child care leave is in addition to any entitlement to family medical leave under section 49.1, family caregiver leave under section 49.3, crime-related child death or disappearance leave under section 49.5 and personal emergency leave under section 50."

So I think, Mr. Speaker, this is speaking to a part of the bill where we're accounting for those situations. We never want to hear a story of a friend's child or any child who is in such a critical and devastating position as to be fighting for his or her life because of a disease that is so potent, like cancer.

So I think this bill is something to applaud, that we're actually dealing with circumstances to help these parents who are faced with perhaps the most traumatic experience they're ever going to go through with the serious care of their children when they are faced with this terrible and devastating news. I want to applaud all members of the Legislature for advocating for parents who are in every riding across the province, to help parents care for their children, particularly when they are faced with such devastating news.

We don't spend enough time talking about the other aspect of this bill, Mr. Speaker, which is the crime-related child death or disappearance leave. Now, this is equally traumatic, I think, for many parents, when they are faced with a situation where their child has disappeared or has been involved in a crime-related death. These are obviously scenarios that we have a hard time relating to because many of us have not had that experience, thankfully, but it's also very important. You can sometimes see these people when they are on a radio show or they're on TV or they're on a radio show or you're reading their story in an article, and as a parent, you're relating to what they must be going through.

I know there was a big case in Woodstock about Tori Stafford and her ensuing death, which I think touched almost every Ontarian, particularly because there were

lots of things going on within our region of Waterloo, which is really just down the road from Woodstock, in Oxford county. In fact, many people who live in my part of the riding of Cambridge often find themselves interrelated with folks in Oxford, whether they're playing hockey down there or whether they have family members who have moved into the county just across the border from us.

And when you're listening to the parents talk about what has transpired with their child, first of all, the devastation of the news, and secondly, that period of time when they don't know whether their child is alive or not, you can certainly, as a parent, sympathize with the mom and dad who are basically running an emotional roller-coaster. Sometimes there's good news that comes in, and you get excited and you get ramped up. As a parent, even as someone who's not actually involved in the situation, you're cheering for the police and you're cheering for those parents. You're rooting for them; you're praying for them. You feel that, but you know that it must be a hundred times worse for that parent.

And then, when you actually get the news that a catastrophe has hit, that tragedy has hit, and you have that sad news that a body has been located, you can certainly sympathize with the parents then. Their whole world has simply crumbled.

I know we talk a lot about this piece of legislation dealing with scenarios that we see almost every day in our ridings, but I know that every time these stories come out in front in the media, we, as parents and as human beings, certainly do a great deal to relate to those scenarios and those situations, and we have to be quite sympathetic to what mom and dad are going through. To have this piece of legislation brought forward to deal with those scenarios is a testament to the good work that this Legislature can produce. I really do mean that in the fullest sense, that this Legislature has the capacity to do great things. In fact, great things happen in this Legislature all the time, and when great things happen in this Legislature, I think we owe it to ourselves and to the people of Ontario to celebrate that. I think that this is going to be one of those instances where we can stand shoulder to shoulder with one another, in unity, to support a piece of legislation that at its very heart supports the foundation of our communities, which are our families: moms and dads, sons and daughters, grandmas and grandpas, aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters. This bill has the capacity to do that.

I'm very pleased that we've had an opportunity to debate this as much as we have. I think that this bill has been improved by the amendments and the suggestions that members have brought forward, that the committee has thoroughly examined this piece of legislation, that we are able to be proud of what we're accomplishing here in this Legislature. This is, I think, a moment in the history of the 40th Parliament that we can certainly be proud of.

I'm glad to have had the opportunity to address this bill on behalf of the PC caucus and on behalf of the people of Cambridge and North Dumfries township.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I want to thank my friend the member from Cambridge for his thoughtful discussion and consideration of this bill here today. I find him to be a considerate individual, a considerate human being, and level-headed. If you don't know the member from Cambridge, just have a chat with him. He's pretty level-headed.

Hon. John Milloy: He's a prince of a guy.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes, he's a great guy, and I think he brings a lot to each and every debate we have in this House.

I want to tell him that he made me think about something that I had not considered: the language barriers that this bill may help families deal with. He referenced his grandfather, who required translation, ultimately, I would imagine, from members of his own family, to be able to facilitate the care he received, and as small of a measure as that may be, someone there to simply be able to facilitate dialogue between a personal support worker and the patient is an enormous portion of delivering good-quality care.

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Through the hours and hours that we've debated this bill, I've not yet heard that as a consideration. I want to thank the member from Cambridge for bringing that to the debate. I think the summary of his speech was that we should make sure that our efforts in this House, particularly when it comes to the health of the people in this province and safeguarding their health, which is the essence of what our job is—public safety is paramount—that we make sure when we walk away from here, when the lights go dim, that we did so knowing that we did everything we could do. We did absolutely everything we could do and we made it as easy as possible for members of our society and our communities to live healthy and productive lives, and I think that's where this bill is heading.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I'm happy to rise again and speak on Bill 21, the leaves for helping families act. Most of the work that we do in the Legislature here requires a lot of evidence, and this is one of those bills where we really don't need any because I think all of us here in the Legislature have experienced at one time or another an illness in the family where we have had to take some time off to care for our loved ones and family members.

I want to thank MPP Rob Leone from Cambridge for his comments in support of this bill. I'm happy to report that we were able to strengthen this bill at the committee level where we're extending the fact that nurses and psychologists can also provide notes, because I know how difficult it can be for some people, especially in the rural communities, to access a doctor to provide a note so they can take this leave.

As well, we're adding other types of chronic or episodic illnesses to this bill because that was something

that we felt, at the committee level, was missing. As well, people can take leave in days instead of weeks because, oftentimes, you don't need a week off to take someone maybe to the doctor or take them to other medical appointments or whatever may be needed in terms of providing care for a loved one.

I would just encourage everyone in the House to support this bill so that we can quickly pass this important piece of legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: This is a very interesting bill because it's part of a march. If we look back, perhaps even 100 years, we find that many of our families were living in two-, three- and possibly four-generational homes.

I know in my case, my great-grandfather lived in Toronto township, which is now Mississauga, and there were three homes on the property. They ran the post office and a little hotel where the stagecoach stopped. They also had a 160-acre farm which they ran, and the family lived close together. There were also neighbours on either side of the farm, and if need be, they were available.

We heard in the House earlier this week about the tragic passing of a farmer up in Lindsay, I believe it was. His neighbours came in and harvested his soybeans in a day so that the crop was off. It was the kind of neighbourly thing that used to happen.

So this bill is a pathway to the future. In my grandfather's generation, there were probably three generations and eight to 12 people living in his home at any one time. If someone was ill or if someone needed care, they got it from within the family. There were probably one or two, possibly three, wage-earners in those days. Today, with two parents working, probably one generation with children, two generations living in a home, those situations that were there in the past don't exist.

This bill is moving us into the future. It's an interesting piece of legislation because as we go into the future, it's very much on an experimental basis, and this bill, I think, is a positive step in that direction.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm really pleased to be able to stand after the member from Cambridge did his piece of debate on this bill. I think he did a really great job. He brought a piece to this third reading of this bill that I hadn't heard yet. That was the point where in a crime-related child death or disappearance, a family would have 52 weeks of unpaid leave for parents of a missing child and up to 104 weeks for parents when it resulted in death. That's a really important piece that I heard today. He mentioned Tori Stafford in that speech, and it brings us back to the reflection of how real this bill is and the difference it can make in a family.

Then it brings me back again just a bit further on how we in the New Democratic Party would have liked to have seen that be a paid time for families. With the

struggles that they're already facing, to have further financial straps put onto that family, as you can imagine, would only make it more difficult. We know how many families live paycheque to paycheque. Without that paycheque, how are they going to keep a roof over their heads when they're going through such struggling times? I really thank the member for bringing that portion to life for me, personally. As I said, I'm happy to support this bill. I'm happy that there were amendments made to this bill to strengthen it, such as breaking up those time pieces so that when we have a family member who needs an hour to go to the doctor, we do have that flexibility within this new law.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Cambridge, you have two minutes.

Mr. Rob Leone: I want to thank the member for Essex, the member from Brampton West, the member from Halton and the member from Hamilton Mountain for providing some comments on the speech I just made on the family caregiver leave act.

Although they were probably too generous in terms of what the speech contained in terms of hearing new things, I think it's very important for us to be in a position to bring up these kinds of stories and shed light on these issues—issues that we all probably have some knowledge of, but probably aren't connecting to the exact debate that we're having in this Legislature. That's what we're doing here as members of provincial Parliament and as members of this Legislative Assembly. That's our job. That's what we're supposed to do.

As I started off saying at the beginning of my talk and my remarks, I think the forefathers and foremothers of our parliamentary system would be very proud to see a Legislature functioning as it should: listening to debate, willing to amend some positions and strengthening a piece of legislation that, at the end of the day, we could all agree to.

I do want to just quickly remark on what the member from Halton said on the multi-generational homes that we face. There's obviously a story to be told there as well. I think people who are in their 40s and 50s often consider themselves part of a sandwich generation, where they're caring for not only their children, but also their parents. There are lots of complications with doing that. I'm not quite that age yet, thankfully, and I'll reserve that for the people who are, but you can see how challenging that becomes, the more generations you're a primary caregiver for.

Again, this piece of legislation has merit, and I look forward to listening to further debate on this matter.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rod Jackson: I'm very pleased to rise in the House to speak to this bill, the Employment Standards Amendment Act (Leaves to Help Families). I've had the pleasure of speaking to this on numerous occasions at different readings and in different incarnations, if you will, and it's something that I feel quite strongly about. I have some background I'm going to share with everyone

about this and why I feel strongly about this act and think that it's a good act. It has minor flaws, like I think every act does. Nothing is perfect. But certainly I think a lot of it has been ironed out throughout committee.

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We're talking about some of the most difficult experiences that any family or person could be faced with in many cases, and we're talking about the ability of our Legislature to be able to show a little bit of compassion and to be able to show a little bit of understanding about the difficulty these families may face when they're dealing with some of these issues.

It is a shame that the financial devastation that many of these families face as a result of some of these tragedies that they incur isn't being addressed here as fulsomely as it can. Having said that, we know there's only so much to go around, and this is maybe a really good first step and the foot in the door, if you will, towards really trying to help these families out.

I think we all agree that some of the most traumatic experiences someone can experience are their loved ones becoming critically ill or losing a child even, or something equally devastating. There are so many combinations of what can happen to a family to create a situation where this sort of leave is actually needed.

In fact, it's kind of sad that, in this day and age, this sort of leave needs to be legislated. I think it needs to be said that there are a lot of employers out there today that do—I'd like to think that the majority of them are compassionate enough that they would be able to give this leave to their staff, if they have a tragic occurrence, in their businesses, when they can. Speaking from my own experience, my family has been in small business for themselves and entrepreneurs for generations, since the 1900s, starting with farming and moving right through the automotive business, starting out fixing tractors. I know that the one thing that my father always told me in business is, "You're only as good as the staff that you bring along with you." Everyone always says that the customer comes first; my dad always said that your staff comes first. You can't take care of your customers if you don't take care of your staff. If they're happy, then your customers are happy, and that's how you make your business work. Back to my original point on this: It is kind of a shame that this legislation needs to be had, because there are employers out there that don't view things that way, so it is important that we address it and make sure that these people have the right to be able to take the leave to be able to care for their family.

Everyone can relate to these issues. Everyone at one point in their lives, or even ourselves—we don't want to face these things, but we do. We've got to make sure that we do what we can to get these families through their trying times.

This bill has been carefully considered at committee, and there have been some amendments that I think many of us have debated and suggested that have gone through, after some really good discussion through committee. The fact that other medical practitioners other than doctors—for example, as has been mentioned, nurses and

psychologists—can write notes and justify why this medical leave is needed I think is a great way to go. I know in Barrie, for example, there are 30,000 people who don't have a family doctor, so just having access to a doctor is a whole other issue. It can be difficult for some of these families, so to allow for nurses or other medical practitioners to be able to write a note to be able to get this medical leave started for these families is a great step in the right direction and was a very productive amendment made, and I commend the committee and the government for making that amendment.

Also, adding chronic and episodic illnesses—in fact, they're probably the majority of the cases, I think. I think we all look at our own families and friends, and we can think of examples of where chronic and episodic illnesses are kind of a regular feature in our lives. Some of us even deal with them ourselves, so they really hit home. So for these to be added I think just kind of speaks to the reality of the bill and what this bill is really trying to do, and it speaks to the genuine nature of what this bill is supposed to do. That's the nice part about this bill: It's that this is something I think we can all get behind, and it's something that we've all experienced at one point in our lives or another. To be able to actually do something about it and to be able to help these people, even if it's in some sort of small way—like I said before, putting your foot in the door to try to help these families out in one way or another shows the compassion, I think, that we need to be known for and that, as leaders in our communities, is expected of us to deliver. It kind of gives me a little bit of faith in the human condition when we can come to an agreement on a bill like this that actually helps people out.

My background is in human resources and labour relations. I can tell you, from my experience dealing with employees from large corporations that I've worked with in that capacity, the number and the varying instances of people who need leave—there are so many different variations of this that come across your desk as an HR manager in a large company, and the need for this can't be understated. The number of people who come to you—every one is almost a new situation, and to be able to address that in a very comprehensive way, which this bill does, really gives us a great opportunity to help those people out.

I'm lucky in my own family. I have a large extended family. We've been able to care for each other when any of these opportunities have come up. I speak from my own personal experience. My own mother, just a few years ago, had a tragic accident—I'm sure she wouldn't mind me talking about this—where both her Achilles tendons were snapped in a fall she had. My mom was fairly young when this happened. This wasn't a woman in her senior years who had this happen. Our whole family was pretty much put on hold to make sure that she

was taken care of, to the point where my 85-year-old grandmother actually came up from Kitchener to stay with my mom to take care of her. We were lucky we had that sort of background. Her sisters and myself and my brother and our wives all pitched in to help.

That's not always the case, and that's not always an option, to have that many people in your family stand by. So to be able to have this option for people who don't have that privilege of having such a large family who can be there when you need them is very, very helpful.

I had another instance where a very good friend of mine had a son who was born with a very, very severe physical disability that was very tragic and very difficult for this family to deal with. Both he and his wife had burgeoning careers and had to put them on hold, both of them, at one point or another to help deal with their son who had—I can't remember the name of the condition, but it was one of the most severe things I've ever been exposed to, and very traumatic even to witness. I will report, though, that five or six years later, this child is actually doing quite well and is functioning, although at a great challenge. If you want to talk about getting a sense of someone who has really got staying power and gives you encouragement, you look at this kid at that age and the strength and perseverance he's shown through his family's ability to be with him through these years; it's really, really enlightening. It gives you a lot of confidence when you think about how tough life is for us sometimes and you look at this little guy and you see how he's made out at such a young age. He's deaf and blind and functioning at a very high level for someone who has these sorts of disabilities, not to mention his physical disabilities as well.

This sort of leave provides families like that with an opportunity to continue their careers and to be able to care for their children or to care for their parents or for the sick relative that they may have that they have to take care of.

I know it's so difficult for parents. I think all of us have constituents who come into our offices at different times and have all sorts of different stories about the difficulties they are having. Many times, it's because their employer doesn't have the capacity to allow them to take the time off or doesn't want to give them the time off. It's quite sad to see.

You look like you're about to stop me. I'll defer to the Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you very much.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): This House stands adjourned until Monday, 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Deuxième session, 40^e législature

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Monday 2 December 2013

Lundi 2 décembre 2013



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 2 December 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 2 décembre 2013

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm very pleased to introduce two very special guests today. Jeffery Golde is the proud owner and operator of a 1976 Rolls-Royce Silver Shadow, the long-wheel-base version of it. Accompanying me in the Rolls-Royce was Ferdinando Longo, who is on Minister Mario Sergio's staff. The purpose of the trip this morning was in support of the Courtice Rotary Club and an event where Ferdinando bought this special occasion for a ride to Queen's Park in the Rolls-Royce and lunch with me. Nothing could be higher and more important. The event was to raise money for the Clarington Older Adult centre, sponsored by the Courtice Rotary Club.

Miss Monique Taylor: I would like to welcome Mr. Vico Rosatone. It's his first visit to Queen's Park in the Legislature for question period today.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Many of us here are fans of Murdoch Mysteries. It is my pleasure to introduce to the Legislature the ladies and gentlemen who create, manage and perform for us and for audiences in more than 100 countries worldwide from their headquarters right here in Ontario. I ask members to please hold their recognition until I've introduced everyone, and there are a few.

In the members' east gallery: Christina Jennings, chairman and CEO of Toronto-based Shaftesbury, producer of Murdoch Mysteries; Scott Garvie, senior vice-president, business and legal affairs, of Shaftesbury; Julie Lacey, vice president, creative, of Shaftesbury; Peter Mitchell, executive producer of Murdoch Mysteries; Paul Aitken, co-executive producer of Murdoch Mysteries; Stephen Montgomery, producer of Murdoch Mysteries; Katherine Wolfgang, vice-president of communication, Shaftesbury; Tanya Koivusalo, publicist at Shaftesbury; Christos Kalohoridis, photographer at Shaftesbury; Andra Sheffer, executive director, COGECO Program Development Fund; Karen Thorne-Stone, president and CEO, Ontario Media Development Corporation; Julie Look, director of research, Canada Media Fund; Suzanne Colvin-Goulding, senior director, production planning, CBC; and Gave Lindo, manager, business rights, CBC.

Now some of the people behind the characters who visit us in our homes weekly on Murdoch Mysteries: playing Detective William Murdoch, actor Yannick Bisson—

Applause.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Hold on. We're not done yet: Mr. Bisson's spouse and periodic guest star, actress Chantal Craig; playing Constable George Crabtree, actor Jonny Harris; playing Dr. Emily Grace, actress Georgina Reilly. Joining us later at the reception in room 340 will be actress Hélène Joy, playing Dr. Julia Ogden. Actor Thomas Craig, who plays Inspector Brackenreid, is out of town today.

We are also joined by my own beloved spouse, Andrea Seepersaud, fully enjoying her time among the stars.

I am also pleased to introduce Monika Duggal, my constituency assistant, and a very old friend, Brian Ellis, who are also joining us in the members' east gallery.

Speaker, these people are returning for the first time since they filmed an episode in this building, set 113 years ago: the men and women behind Murdoch Mysteries.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you, and welcome to our guests.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: As a former legislative page myself, it gives me great honour to introduce the family of the current page from my riding, Julia Brunet. Her mother and father, Sinead and Robert, are here; brothers James and William; grandparents Robert and Diana; and family friends Walter and Alison Lenny. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Mr. Speaker, there's a Cape Bretoner in the House this morning, my good friend Debbie MacRury from Cape Breton. She was also recognized this last weekend as Miss Movember. Welcome, Debbie.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, would you please help welcome, from Kingston, Heather Blue and Quinton Bradshaw. Quinton Bradshaw won a challenge that the mayor issued some time ago as to how they would make Kingston more sustainable. It would include changes to the building code that would allow for more grey water recycling and more renewable energy.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to recognize Dave Bутtenham, CEO of the Ontario Agri Business Association, who will be with us here a little later. I remind all members about their event this evening in room 228. I welcome the Ontario Agri Business Association to Queen's Park.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'd like to welcome Kathy Clee from my riding of London West, who is also my constituency assistant.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'd like to welcome Brian and Wendy Anderson of Athlone Farms and Athlone Bio

Power to the Legislature. They also happen to be the parents of my staffer Amber Anderson.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm delighted to introduce His Worship Gerry Marshall, mayor of Penetanguishene, who is here today.

I also want to introduce Jeff Mole from Trillium Energy Alliance, who is here as well.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I'd like to welcome Shahene Patel and Zohra Azizi from my riding of Scarborough-Guildwood.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean-Carleton on a point of order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I wanted to acknowledge in this House the passing of one of Canada's, and I think one of Ontario's, most special people, Cliff Chadderton. I thought we could do that today, Speaker.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's a pleasure to welcome Don McCabe, vice-president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, to the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Last call for introductions.

On behalf of the member from Brampton West and page Arvind Krishendeholl: mother Nalini and father Seudial are in the public gallery today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Premier, what I'm concerned about is that under your leadership in Ontario, if you are well connected, you get ahead. The middle class is shrinking and many families are struggling to get by with a part-time or minimum wage job, at best.

We have 10 days left in this session before the government is going to break for Christmas. Premier, on which of those 10 days are you going to finally bring forward your jobs plan to restore hope to the people of Ontario who desperately need a change of course and a jobs plan starting now?

1040

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: You know, the reality is that we have a plan, Mr. Speaker. There are jobs coming to this province, and I have a list of companies that have created jobs and have expanded in order to employ more people. I think what the Leader of the Opposition is asking me is whether I will adopt his plan, and his plan would actually cut jobs out of the province. It would slash services across government, and that's not what we're going to do. We believe that making the investments in people and the investments in infrastructure and the investments in a business climate that will bring business to the province—that those investments are the ones we should be making. That's our plan, that is what we're doing, and jobs are coming to this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, if the Premier calls the loss of 300,000 manufacturing jobs, the kind of province where families are lucky to get a part-time job or a minimum-wage job just to pay the bills—if that's what the Premier calls a plan, then clearly, Speaker, it's time to toss out the plan, toss out the government and bring in a team that can lead us back to economic recovery.

Premier, you know what? I invite you to go and tell the people of Leamington, Ontario, that your plan is working: 800 families now out of work, farmers whose product is not going to get to market, an incredible impact on the community.

You know, Rick Nicholls and I were there, and I want to salute Rick for fighting for the people in his community to restore some hope to Leamington. We did an open town hall meeting, invited anybody from the community to come in, and I saw the pain of families who are going to lose their jobs. They are worried about their pensions, their mortgages, and how they are going to get by with a minimum-wage, part-time job at best.

Premier, I listened directly to the people of Leamington. Why don't you actually hold an open town hall yourself and tell them that your plan is working?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, as the Leader of the Opposition knows, I was in Leamington before he got there. I had a meeting with the people who are working to make sure that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That will do.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Speaker, we included his member in that meeting. He was part of the meeting. We talked with the folks who are intimately involved in creating opportunities and making sure that, first of all, the employees are treated well and that there is a robust plan going forward.

I think what the people of Leamington want to know, Mr. Speaker, is that we are on the ground, that we are going to work with them to make sure we find a way to replace those jobs and make sure people have opportunities. That's why we've already flowed \$200,000 to facilitate that process, and we will put everything we can into support for that community.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I think it's a study in contrast, Speaker, because when the Premier went to Leamington, she had a closed-door, backroom meeting and then skipped out of town as fast as she could. Rick Nicholls and I had an open town hall to hear directly from the people of our province, to talk about our plan to actually bring hope back to the community.

Your problem, Premier, is you seem to think that job losses are a temporary inconvenience, that they are a nuisance that can be simply solved by a press release and a photo op. That's not going to cut it.

I think you should go back to Leamington and have a town hall, and if you want to tell them your plan is

working, then by all means do so. But I'll ask you to tell them this: Which one of your plans that you've brought through since you and I had a deal to clear the decks—is it the 24/7 emergency rescue for cats and dogs? Is it the smoking on patios? Is it banning water heater salesmen? Which of those three parts of your plan, Premier, will bring a single job back to the people of Leamington, Ontario—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew will withdraw.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's number two. And I don't stand for you to have a quiet moment to heckle.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Leader of the Opposition knows that I am not averse to having open discussion, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the Leader of the Opposition takes every opportunity to stand up and tell me that we do too much conversation, and that is absolutely not the case.

The meeting we had in Leamington was a working meeting. It was a meeting with people who understand that community, and I am quite sure that the people who came to the town hall were some of those same people. That's as it should be. We are going to work with the community.

I know that the Leader of the Opposition heard from residents that the federal government changes to food packaging rules have had an impact.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland—Quinte West will come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm not blaming anyone, Mr. Speaker. I'm saying that that's one of the things that the Leader of the Opposition heard. So we need to work with the federal government and we need to work with the community to make sure we find a way to make sure those people have jobs and that industry can thrive.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: Premier, closed meetings are not exactly transparent; they're not open. The problem I have is if you wall yourself up at Queen's Park, if you wall yourselves up with inside advisers and you don't have an open town hall, you're never going to understand what's actually happening in communities across our great province of Ontario.

Premier, the middle class is being hollowed out. My Ontario always built things. We'll always make things; we'll sell products around the world. We can beat the best of the best, but we're not going to do that with skyrocketing energy rates, more and more red tape and a Premier whose priority seems to be water heater

salesmen, 24/7 rescue and getting a pat on the back from Al Gore for driving those hydro rates through the roof in the first place. I've got to wonder what your priorities are.

Let me ask you this, Premier: The problem in the province of Ontario is we're hollowing out the middle class and minimum-wage jobs are the only jobs that people can get. Is this your measure of success: that your odds, if you're working in Ontario, have now doubled that it's a minimum-wage job and that the proportion of minimum-wage jobs in the province of Ontario is up 100%? My vision: middle-class jobs—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, let me just say that the plan that we have got in place is a rational plan. The long-term energy plan is going to be released today. It's part of that plan because we understand that if we can make the right investments in people, the right investments in infrastructure and create a dynamic business climate such as the business climate that Murdoch Mysteries thrives in, then we can bring business and we can bring talent to this province. That is our plan. There are a lot of things—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward—Hastings got one there.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I welcome the critique of the Leader of the Opposition, and there are many things to critique, but telling me that I haven't been out talking to people in this province, that's not one of them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: You know, a few references to Murdoch Mysteries—we're thrilled that they're here. Maybe they can help the OPP investigate your office, investigate Chris Mazza and investigate the green energy scandal in this province. Maybe they can help you locate where Chris Mazza has run to in the province as well.

Look, I've got to tell you, Premier, I know it's hard to take, but facts are stubborn things. The facts tell us that we've lost over 300,000 manufacturing jobs. Under your leadership, the concern I have is that pace has accelerated. We've lost an additional 38,000 manufacturing jobs under your watch.

The fact of the matter is that the number of minimum-wage jobs as a proportion of all jobs has doubled. So if you lose your job, you're lucky to get a minimum-wage or a part-time job in Liberal Ontario. That's why I'm going to fight for change each and every day. Let's get hydro rates under control. Let's get taxes down. Let's close down the College of Trades. Let's put people and grow the middle class instead of putting them all in minimum-wage jobs—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.
Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, the Leader of the Opposition can diminish the good jobs in the film industry and television industry, but those are very important jobs, and it's a very important industry for this province. I believe that those investments that we need to make are investments in our strengths, playing to our strengths, and that is one of our strengths.

I also want to just say, in answer to the Leader of the Opposition's question, when he talks about good jobs, I would ask him back: What part of right-to-work legislation, that is driving jobs down to the bottom, creates good jobs? That's his labour policy, and we're not going there.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

Final supplementary.

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Mr. Tim Hudak: When Camaro was going to Michigan, when Caterpillar goes to Indiana, your role: Put your head in the sand and kiss the manufacturing jobs goodbye. I'm going to do everything I can to grow our middle class, put people into good jobs, give them a better future. I've got a plan to bring 300,000 manufacturing jobs into our province. Your record: one of more minimum-wage jobs.

I'll tell you this, too, Premier: If you're a new Canadian, like my grandparents were who came to this province because they believed they'd have a better future by working hard—they started a business. New Canadians under the Liberal government: 20% of minimum-wage jobs today.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Glengarry, come to order. The Minister of Rural Affairs, come to order.

Mr. Tim Hudak: They're falling behind as well. This path is taking us to bankruptcy and hollowing out our middle class.

I've got a plan to modernize our labour laws, get our energy rates under control, lower taxes, get Ontario back on its feet and make our middle class the envy of the entire country, top among the provinces. That's our plan. Where the heck is yours? We've only got 10 days left—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm hoping some people are recognizing the number of times they've been talked to. I think I will repeat it again.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Not really.
Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Since June 2009, which was the low after the recession, there were 460,900 net

new jobs in Ontario, Mr. Speaker. There are net new jobs at Toyota, Ford, GM, Green Arc Tire Manufacturing, newterra, Pillar5 Pharma and Lambton Conveyor. All across the province there are net new jobs.

But let's be perfectly clear: the Leader of the Opposition's plan would cut tens of thousands of jobs out of this province, would undermine labour and thereby undermine the ability of people to earn a good wage and undermine the workplace safety that has been gained over decades and decades of strong labour laws in this province.

The Leader of the Opposition, when he talks about modernizing labour, is talking about undermining the gains and protections that have been made by organized labour over the last 100 years. That's what he's talking about.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not getting things quiet for you to heckle. I'm getting things quiet so that we can hear the next question.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. For Ontarians paying the highest electricity bills in the country, the latest promises from the Liberal government of some relief on the hydro bills ring pretty hollow. Why should consumers believe the government has now got a plan when they haven't stuck to any of the other long-term energy plans they've developed over a decade in office?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would have thought that the leader of the third party would like to see a plan that was updated, and that plan will be coming out today. The new plan is a balanced approach to meet the energy needs that we have today.

The reality of an energy plan is that it has to take into account the conditions that exist at the time that the plan is in place. So this plan is based on what we have heard from First Nation and Métis communities, from energy stakeholders, from municipalities and consumers from across the province. That's what we have based this plan on, Mr. Speaker.

Since 2003, what we have done is we have modernized an electricity system that was severely out of date, that needed investment, that needed upgrading. That's the work that we've been doing, and it's only responsible that we would continue that work. That's what the long-term energy plan is about.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: For 10 years, the government has played political games with electricity policy, and people are stuck paying the skyrocketing bills that resulted.

When the Liberal government first announced plans to invest in new nuclear plants, New Democrats said that

that plan was expensive and that plan was unnecessary. For eight years, the Liberals ignored us and instead spent \$180 million on contracts for a project that they are now finally abandoning.

Why did it take nearly a decade and millions upon millions upon millions of wasted dollars for the government to conclude the obvious?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the leader of the third party knows that the work that was done in preparation for new nuclear is not work that goes to waste, Mr. Speaker. That is work that can be used if and when we need to revisit those plans. But it would be irresponsible of us, in the face of all of the evidence, to go ahead and to build at this point.

What's interesting is the leader of the third party is criticizing us for having a plan. She's criticizing us for one aspect of preparation that we were making, given the best advice, and now we are putting in place a long-term energy plan. We've created 31,000 jobs with our clean energy policies, none of which the leader of the third party has supported. I would have expected that she would have thought that those were a good idea. In fact, she doesn't have a plan and she's not supporting ours. It's curious as how to how she thinks we should move forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This isn't the only example. The Liberal government has already signed \$950 million in new contracts for refurbishment of the Darlington nuclear plant, but we don't know what the final price tag is.

Does the Premier think it's a good idea to spend nearly \$1 billion without having a final price tag?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It is responsible for the government to plan for future need. It is responsible for the government to have a plan to make sure we have the capacity to generate the energy that's needed. The problem when we came into office in 2003 was that there was not enough capacity. We did not have the energy that was needed. We were facing brownouts and blackouts, and we knew that we needed to make investments in order to have the capacity that was necessary. That's what we have done. The long-term energy plan will lay out how we determine what we need to go forward. I hope the leader of the third party will take a look at it and see that in that plan is that future blueprint for the future energy needs of the province.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. For Ontario families and businesses paying the highest electricity rates in Canada, this doesn't look like a plan for affordable power. It looks like a desperate government trying to hold on to political power. Whether it's \$180 million spent on nuclear plants that were abandoned or the nearly \$1 billion spent on refurbishment plans without a final price tag or the \$1 billion spent on moving gas plants to save a couple of Liberal seats, how

can the Premier expect the people to believe that this government has a plan to make electricity affordable?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to speak to the programs that we've got in place that actually help business to deal with energy prices. The Industrial Electricity Incentive Program: Eligible companies qualify for electricity rates that are among the lowest in North America in exchange for creating new jobs and bringing new investment into the province. Again, Mr. Speaker, that's something I would have thought that both opposition parties would support. The Large Industrial Conservation Initiative, which helps large consumers save on costs by putting incentives in place to shift their electricity consumption to off-peak hours—that's something that allows companies to save money. And then Northern Industrial Electricity Rate Program reduces electricity prices for large northern industrial consumers by 25%. All of those programs are in recognition of the fact that businesses need to have the capacity to be competitive. I would have thought that the leader of the third party would have supported those programs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: People are telling us that they need help, and the solution from the Liberals is, "Just get used to it."

Jennifer from Niagara wrote to say, "Our system is totally broken.... There is a point of no return and a ceiling that is inevitable before you simply cannot give any more."

What does the Premier have to offer people like Jennifer besides more of the same?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We have a number of programs that I know the leader of the third party will want to inform her constituents about. The Ontario Clean Energy Benefit, which the leader of the third party knows helps families and small businesses, takes 10% off hydro bills. The Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit saves qualifying individuals about \$963 a year and up to \$1,097 for qualifying seniors. The Northern Ontario Energy Credit saves another up to \$210 a year. The Low-Income Energy Assistance Program and the saveON-energy Home Assistance Program. So we have a number of plans in place that save money for the people who qualify for those programs, Mr. Speaker.

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I think what's important is that the leader of the third party be upfront with the reality that they have no plan. The fact that they have no plan—it's not responsible when they attack our plan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, people are hoping this government will actually offer some relief, but all they hear are the same empty promises from the Liberals, and they're stuck paying the bills for a decade of failed Liberal policy. For 10 years, they've watched their bills climb as they pay the price of Liberals' energy misadventures in this province.

The government wasted billions in public dollars, and it has gone straight to the people's bills. What relief will they offer them today?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've already outlined some of the programs we have in place that are targeted directly at people in their homes so they can save money.

The Minister of Energy will be bringing out the long-term energy plan today, and I know that the House will be interested that we are focusing on conservation. We believe it's extremely important that we do everything we can to help people conserve energy, because the cheapest megawatt is one that's not used.

So we are working very hard to make sure we have the right supports and incentives in place, Mr. Speaker, to help people save money.

I hope that the leader of the third party, although she has no plan, will look at the plan that we are putting in place and that she will be able to support those incentives—because those plans are very, very responsible in terms of helping people to deal with the realities of energy in the province.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Premier. Good morning, Premier. Later today, the Liberals will introduce a short-term energy plan. By all accounts, it will be one that continues the decade-long policy that hikes electricity rates and power bills for Ontarians.

Speaker, telling Ontario job creators to control their own energy bills signals a vast departure from Ontario's traditional industrial policy that made us an economic powerhouse from Confederation right up until a decade ago, when they assumed power.

Doesn't the Premier think that the massive increases in energy bills over the last decade and the coinciding decline of our manufacturing sector actually says the government, not our job creators, should get their energy prices under control?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would just draw to the attention of the member of the opposition that electricity prices for large industrial consumers remain in line with the major neighbouring jurisdictions. They're competitive with New York, with Michigan, with Pennsylvania. That's the program we put in place. Those energy prices are competitive, Mr. Speaker.

I really believe that if we think that we can take lessons from the opposition on how to run the energy sector, we'll be in a sorry state. From 1996 to 2003, when that government was in office, capacity fell by 6% and demand rose by 8%. They increased the use of dirty coal by 127%. In 2002, Ontario paid \$500 million to import electricity. In 2003, Ontario paid \$400 million to import electricity.

Mr. Speaker, we have put in place the investments that are necessary to have a stable electricity sector. That's why we're bringing in a long-term energy plan—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: That's simply not true, Speaker. I stood in this House last week and read right into the record that the Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers' Association said that rates here in Ontario are much higher, to the tune of 129%, than in some jurisdictions in the United States, including Chicago, Detroit and Nashville. They're beating us out.

She knows full well that it is her government's reliance on subsidized wind and solar that has put us in this place. She knows full well that it's her cancellation of \$181 million of nuclear reactors that have put us in this place. She knows that it is her reliance on seats in Mississauga and Oakville that has put us in this place. And we can only conclude that they are announcing the long-term energy plan today to distract from her appearance at the gas plants committee tomorrow.

Speaker, if she is serious about fixing energy prices in the province of Ontario and she wants the jobs to come back, there's only one way forward, and it is Tim Hudak's plan on affordable energy. She could adopt that plan today. She could—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: —forward and she could ensure that—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Order, please.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member of the opposition claims that her party wants to reduce hydro rates, but at the same time, they want to spend \$15 billion on generating new nuclear that is not necessary. So I would question the very premise of the member's contention, Mr. Speaker.

We have put in place programs that support industrial users who are competitive. I talked about the programs we've got in place: the Industrial Electricity Incentive Program, the Industrial Conservation Initiative and the Northern Industrial Electricity Rate Program. But the member of the opposition is correct: We have made investments in the electricity sector; much-needed investments in a system that was neglected by the previous government. Those investments have meant that we have a stable supply and that we have a future plan, none of which was in place when we came into office after their regime.

DARLINGTON NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the Premier: The government has, by its own admission, signed nearly \$1 billion worth of contracts for nuclear refurbishment at Darlington, but by their own admission, they don't know the final price tag.

Why is the Premier making a billion-dollar down payment when she doesn't know the final cost?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to analyze the questions that have been coming from the third party. They do not support new nuclear—fair enough—they do not support refurbishment, they do not support our green energy policies. It's very questionable what they support. What we do know is that there is not a plan in place.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Prince Edward–Hastings will come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Yes, Mr. Speaker, we believe that refurbishment is necessary. Yes, we believe the new nuclear build is not necessary. Yes, we believe that our green energy policies, which have taken coal off-line and have cleaned up the air in this province, are the way to go. I would ask the member what their plan is.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, Speaker, I'm sorry that the Premier didn't see fit to answer the question. Sadly, this is nothing new—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Chatham–Kent–Essex will come to order.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: They signed private power contracts for gas plants that left us with a billion-dollar bill. They added another \$180 million to our hydro bills with a plan for new nuclear plants that weren't going to be built.

Does the Premier think it's wise to spend another billion dollars on a refurbishment plan when she doesn't even know what the price tag is going to be?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, I think it's wise to have a plan. I think it's wise to understand how we are going to generate energy for this province, how we are going to support the citizens of this province so that they will have a stable energy supply. I think it's wise to make sure that we have the programs, supports and incentives in place so that business can be competitive, and so that individuals can afford their energy prices. And I think it is wise, Mr. Speaker, to have that plan in place for years to come, so that we are not in a reactive mode to every populist idea that comes along.

So having that plan, having that long-term energy plan in place, which does have to be retooled from time to time, is our process, and that's the plan that will be released today.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. Congestion is stifling growth and economic opportunities in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood. It hurts our businesses and is affecting the greater Toronto and Hamilton area's standing as a competitive global region.

Civic and business leaders from all sides of the political spectrum have joined the movement for greater

investment in transportation infrastructure. One of those leaders is John Tory, from CivicAction, who spoke this morning about CivicAction's Your32 campaign and transportation's impact on people's quality of life. I'm proud to say that before I joined this Legislature, I was a part of this organization.

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Congestion comes with a \$6-billion annual cost to commuters and the economy of the GTHA, Canada's most significant urban regional economy according to the OECD. In order for us to grow and remain competitive, gridlock must be addressed.

Speaker, will the minister inform this House what the government is doing to help solve the congestion crisis in our region?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank the member for Scarborough–Guildwood. This is a remarkable woman who has had a lifetime of commitment to transit—her work at CivicAction and now as an MPP in this House. I want to thank her.

I want to thank Mr. Tory for joining us today and for his leadership—has been quite remarkable as a journalist. He was having breakfast this morning, promoting it.

Mr. Speaker, we are at over \$19 billion in public transit investments in the Toronto–Hamilton area alone. We will exceed \$20 billion in next year's budget. This is a record level of spending. Fifteen major rapid transit projects are being built all across the region, reducing congestion.

We are picking up over 90% of the transit costs; the federal government's contribution is 3.85%, which I think is a global record for a lack of investment by a national government. The only record they're breaking is disinvestment—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Minister, for your answer. It is important to hear that the Ontario Liberal government has taken transportation investments seriously, including the commitment to a fully funded subway to Scarborough.

It has been unfortunate that the federal government has largely been missing in action on dedicated, sustainable investments in public transportation in Ontario. I agree: In order for the GTHA to prosper and remain competitive, the federal government must step up and pay their fair share.

Recently, you and I were at an announcement at the Union Pearson Express. This major transportation investment will certainly help to reduce congestion on our roads and help travellers in their commute to the airport. Speaker, will the minister give an update to this House on the Union Pearson Express project?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The project is ahead of budget and on time. This is a \$456-million project. It will take 1.2 million cars off of the road. It's very important.

Mr. Tory asked us to try and come up with a clear position. Mr. Speaker, we know that the party opposite doesn't like automobiles because they didn't want to lend

any money to Chrysler or General Motors, and they would have killed our auto sector. They want to take about half of the projects that are on Bombardier's books and cancel every LRT project. That would literally throw Bombardier under the bus—thousands and thousands of jobs lost.

Mr. Speaker I note that they cancelled Eglinton the first time because they didn't like subways. Now they want to cancel it because it's an LRT. I'm really confused. They hated subways before and filled them in; now they hate LRTs and fill them in. I'm sure if we said—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

I continually listen carefully to all questions and answers, and there are times when the government has not stayed on policy. I'm going to remind everyone that the questions are on policy and the answers are on government policy, and I appreciate you staying so.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I don't want any interruptions while I'm trying to explain something.

New question.

CHRIS MAZZA

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. Speaker, I want to ask the Premier how she and her minister can justify standing by their \$9.3-million man. With every new revelation of the Ornge scandal, two things become ever more clear: First is that Chris Mazza engaged in a premeditated scheme to defraud our health care system of millions of dollars, but just as clear is the fact that the government is as guilty as Mazza for the waste and for failing our front-line people, our patients and our taxpayers.

Not only did Chris Mazza siphon millions of dollars through his corporate scheme, but we now learn that millions more were siphoned and were never reported through the sunshine list.

So I ask the Premier this: How can she justify defending a man who defrauded our health care system of millions, and what does this latest revelation about our public disclosure system say—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, I'm not defending this man or his actions, Mr. Speaker. I know that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is going to want to speak to the specifics, but we have made huge changes at Ornge. We have made huge changes that address the issues that were raised by this set of circumstances. But to suggest that I'm defending those actions is absolutely not accurate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, this is why the people of this province have lost confidence in this government. Rather than show leadership, the Premier and her ministers hide behind process and the veil of being able to wash their hands and deflect responsibility.

Speaker, is there any department in this government at all that the people of this province can trust? Now it's the salary disclosure process through the Ministry of Finance that we can no longer trust. Millions of dollars of salary were siphoned by Mazza. The public salary disclosure system failed to disclose millions of dollars. Are we to believe that Mazza's salaries are the only ones that have been hidden and that haven't been disclosed by that salary disclosure system?

Will the Premier agree to call in the Auditor General to do an audit of the salary disclosure system in the Ministry of Finance so that we know what's going on in this government?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Dufferin-Caledon will come to order. The member from Durham will come to order.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have said before and I say again that Dr. Mazza and his former board abused the trust that was placed in them; he abused the trust that was placed in him.

Mr. Frank Klees: Why is he still on your payroll?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite knows full well that he is not on my payroll.

As soon as we became aware of those abuses, I ordered a forensic audit. The Ministry of Finance sent in a forensic audit team. The report from that forensic audit team has gone to the OPP, where it belongs. The member opposite knows that there is an OPP investigation under way. That is an important part of due process, which I know the member opposite is not very fond of.

But in the meantime, Speaker, Ornge continues to get stronger and better every single day.

CHRIS MAZZA

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

Air ambulance is an essential service in Ontario. People's lives depend on it. But instead of making sure that health care dollars were going towards saving lives, almost \$10 million of it went right into the pocket of Dr. Mazza. The rules were in place against that, but the government chose not to enforce them. See no evil, hear no evil.

Whistle-blowers had gone to the government in 2010. They came to the New Democrats. We asked questions,

point blank, on November 16, 2010: What was Mazza's salary? We gave you the mandate to go look into his salary because whistle-blowers had told us that things had gone wrong. Why did the government pay Mazza \$9.3 million? Why didn't they do their job? Why didn't they go look into Mazza's salary back in 2010 and avoid all of this?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I think when it comes to Ornge, when we became aware of the abuse, we did take action. There is an entirely new volunteer board doing excellent work at Ornge. The OPP have an investigation under way.

Let me make it very clear: This kind of abuse of the trust of the people of this province is completely unacceptable. That's why we took the very strong action that we did, and that is why Ornge is into a new chapter.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Mr. Speaker, the government stood by and allowed Mazza to basically use public money as a cash-for-life program. They stood by while he drove this organization into the ground. The \$9.3 million could have hired 160 nurses who could have cared for 2,000 people in home care.

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The reason Chris Mazza was paid \$9.3 million wasn't because he cleverly hoodwinked the government; it was because the government never bothered to look into Ornge. They failed at their primary mandate of oversight. They failed to do their job.

That leaves us with: What keeps it from happening again? What reassurance can she give us that there aren't dozens of other Ornges out there?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I know this is an issue that has received much attention from committees in this House, Speaker, and I welcome that. But I think it's very important that people acknowledge the strengthening that has gone on at Ornge. Ornge must now comply with the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act. They must publicly report expenses and submit detailed financial reports. They're now subject to freedom-of-information requests. Salaries of Ornge executives are posted online. They have a new conflict-of-interest policy establishing clear rules. They have a new patient advocate, who works with patients to address any concerns they may have. They have implemented several changes to enhance patient safety: additional training for helicopter pilots, including controlled access into terrain. They've revised the operating procedures for night operations, including operations into black hole sites. They're installing solar lighting at—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Phil McNeely: This question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Speaker, one of the biggest challenges we face is ensuring that our senior citizens and patients with specialized needs receive the

highest quality of care. Studies have shown that roughly 75% of seniors with complex conditions who are discharged from hospital receive care from six or more physicians, and 30% get their drugs from three or more pharmacies. This creates challenges that increase the costs of care. My constituents in Ottawa–Orléans want to be assured that if they or their family need health services, they will receive coordinated care without gaps and duplication.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care: Could the minister please update the House on some of the ways the Ontario government is working to strengthen community health care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It's important to understand that about 5% of Ontarians actually account for two thirds of our health care spending. It's very important that those people with complex needs get access to coordinated care so all of the providers who care for that individual come together to develop one plan of care that meets the needs and the hopes and the aspirations of that patient.

I am delighted, Speaker, that 37 community health links have been established across the province and that more are on the way. It is this kind of coordinated care that smooths the transitions of care for complex patients. It will ensure that they get the right care at the right time and in the right place. This is much better care for those individuals, and it also results in better value for our precious health care dollars.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you, Minister, for your response. I know that our government takes community health care seriously. When different health care providers work as a team to care for a patient, they can better coordinate the full patient journey through the health system, leading to better care for patients. Health links have certainly helped to ensure that patients with complex conditions receive the right care at the right time in the right place.

Ontarians in rural communities face unique challenges when it comes to providing care. I know that what may work in a larger area does not necessarily translate to small communities. Speaker, through you to the minister: Could the minister update the House on what our government is doing to strengthen health care in rural communities across the province?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member from Ottawa–Orléans for his interest in and advocacy on this important issue. Communities in rural Ontario face some unique challenges, and our government is committed to strengthening them by improving health services and access to care. That's why we have and will continue to develop health links in a number of rural and northern areas.

Just last Monday, I was in the wonderful community of Orillia and was happy to announce that our govern-

ment is providing \$60,000 to each health link to help identify high-risk patients and develop individualized care plans. Rural communities already exhibit a high degree of collaboration between the health and social sectors. But health links provide a formal venue for them to connect. Moving forward, rural health links will have the flexibility to address unique needs in their communities, including satellite sites and—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Jeff Leal:—community paramedicine. Our government is focused on strengthening rural communities and will continue to work with the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to ensure our rural population has access to services and high-quality patient care.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Mr. Speaker, I was just wondering if the Premier is expected to come back.

Interjection.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: No? Okay. Then my question, I guess, will be for the Minister of Finance.

Minister, while your Premier was out jogging, Ontario lost 300,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs. You can almost run the alphabet, from Sklar Peppler in Ajax to the General Motors transmission and assembly plants in Windsor. The list in between is long: ExxonMobil Chemicals Films in Belleville, Saputo Dairy in Brampton, Navistar in Chatham, Daimler Trucks in London and St. Thomas and its bus factory in Mississauga. Then there's Edscha in Niagara Falls and the General Motors Camaro production in Oshawa, as well as its 110-year operation in St. Catharines. Minister, I can keep going on: Baskin-Robbins in Peterborough, John Deere in Welland, Southwire cable in Stouffville.

As we approach Christmas and the new year, workers in these communities have lost hope. Minister, where is your jobs plan for the people of Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question, because it allows me the opportunity to once again remind the members opposite that our jobs plan has been working, to the extent that we've created over 470,000 net new jobs since the depths of the recession. We've got over 600,000 new jobs that have been created since 2003, and we recognize that the market is changing and we must do everything in our power to continue to invest and stimulate that growth, things that the member opposite has opposed.

So let me cite some issues. We've created more jobs in Ericsson Canada in Ottawa; we've created more jobs in Cambridge because of Toyota. We brought in Ford and supported them in Oakville. We are the ones who supported GM in Ingersoll. We've done more in St. Marys, Ontario, to create more jobs because we recognize the change in the manufacturing sector. We've done

so in Brantford. We've done so in Brockville. We've done so in Arnprior, Ontario. We've done so in Wallaceburg, Ontario, and in Bradford and in Woodstock—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the Minister of Finance. The Heinz plant in Leamington in your Premier's recent drive-by photo op is just another example of your careless approach to Ontario's ailing manufacturing sector.

Here are the facts about your pathetic job-killing plan: One million people are out of work in Ontario today, 300,000 net manufacturing jobs have been lost, Ontario is dead last—dead last, Minister—in wage growth in Canada, and our middle class has been gutted by your Liberal government.

But the good thing is it doesn't have to be this way. Only Tim Hudak and the Ontario PCs understand the severity of Ontario's jobs crisis, and only Tim Hudak and the Ontario PCs have put forward a bold plan to modernize Ontario's labour laws and deal with the thousands of job losses your government has caused.

Minister, will you continue to run away from the manufacturing jobs crisis, or will you finally admit you simply don't have any ideas to create jobs and grow Ontario—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please.

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: First of all, I'm going to give the opportunity to the member opposite to apologize and correct the record, because, quite frankly, he's scaring the heck out of Ontarians when he comes up with figures like a million people unemployed. He knows the figure is roughly half that figure. So I'm going to invite him and give him the opportunity to correct that record.

I want to tell him that we've got a jobs plan. The problem is that that party opposite isn't supporting it. I know that it pains the member opposite that his party didn't support the Southwest—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Halton.

Hon. Eric Hoskins:—that we created a year ago and, in fact—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Because he couldn't hear me, I'll make sure he does. The member from Halton, come to order.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: In fact, of course I know that he feels bad that his party didn't support the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund, because the first two projects that were funded out of that were actually funded in his riding: Armo Tool and Lambton Conveyor, which together created more than 120 new jobs and sustained

more. The Southwestern Ontario Development Fund has already created and retained more than 7,000 jobs.

1130

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. An 85-year-old couple in Hamilton have been separated by the long-term-care system after 60 years of marriage. Unfortunately, Gilda and Domenico Rosatone aren't the first seniors in Ontario to suffer such a cruel separation. Their son Vico has come to Queen's Park today to make an appeal for common sense and compassion.

When will the Liberal government respect the principle of spousal reunification in long-term care and bring Gilda and Domenico Rosatone back together?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Of course we are committed to getting spouses back together. That's why we have changed our rules in long-term-care homes to facilitate spouses being together. It's important. If a couple have been together their whole adult life, we want them to be together for the rest of their life.

The member opposite raises an issue that we are looking at. It's an issue when one of the couple is in long-term care and the other is in a retirement home. This is a different issue, but it is one that we care about and we are exploring what we might be able to do.

In the meantime, I know that every single CCAC in this province is committed to getting couples together as quickly as they can, and I would urge the member opposite to encourage this couple to continue to work with the CCAC.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Wanting to change things isn't good enough. Actually getting to the action of changing things is what the people of this province need. The Acting Premier knows full well that this isn't the way a six-decade love story should end. She also knows that the long-term-care system is broken if the only way for a senior to get a bed is to be in crisis in the community. This government has already said that reuniting couples in the same situation as the Rosatones is "the right thing to do." She repeated it again in the first part of my question, so will the Acting Premier do the right thing and bring Gilda and Domenico Rosatone back together or are they destined to celebrate their future anniversaries apart?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said in the first question, the CCAC, I know, is working hard to bring this couple back together. It's what we all want to happen. And I think the member opposite would be very interested to know that for the first time in a long time, our wait-lists for long-term care are actually dropping, thanks to the excellent work that is being done in the community because of our investments in CCACs and in home care. We're actually seeing fewer people needing to go into long-term care. This is very good news for our health care system and it's very good news for the people who need that extra care.

UNDERGROUND INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Minister of Consumer Services. In my community of Ottawa South, I've been receiving questions from local businesses, municipal leaders and residents about a new requirement to call prior to digging underground for any great depth. I know our government has always been committed to putting public safety first and that we have been supportive of initiatives that prevent damage to vital underground infrastructure, and promoting safe excavating practices. I remember that in the past, we supported industry-led voluntary participation in a one-call-to-dig system across all utilities. However, now I hear questions about mandatory participation by all owners of underground infrastructure in a one-call-to-dig system.

Speaker, through you to the minister, can you please provide more insight into this new program and what the requirements are for owners of underground infrastructure and excavators?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member from Ottawa South for raising the question today. I'd also like to thank two members from the opposition: the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek and the member from Sarnia-Lambton. They've taken a great interest in this file, a very active interest in this file and what's happening.

Just to refresh everyone's memory, the Legislature passed the Ontario underground infrastructure notification act in 2012, and this makes One Call the one and only point of contact in Ontario for underground infrastructure location requests prior to digging. The act requires all owner-operators of underground infrastructure to join One Call. Currently, all non-municipal owners are considered members of One Call, with municipal owners set to come on board by June 2014. Assisting with the implementation of this act, my ministry has been working with One Call to provide the support and make the transition to the act and the day-to-day responsibilities for the act—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: I'm pleased to hear that the ministry will be working with all impacted stakeholders in implementing this service.

I know in talking to residents and municipal leaders that there are some concerns they want to be addressed in the implementation of this mandatory requirement. The concerns raised with me have been around membership, board composition, reporting requirements and enforcement of the act. Many of the stakeholders I have spoken to are looking for better clarification and direction from the ministry on how to proceed with this mandatory call-before-you-dig requirement.

Speaker, could the minister please provide some answers around what the ministry is doing to move forward and address the concerns of stakeholders?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: The member is right: There have been concerns raised by stakeholders on the imple-

mentation of the program, so we released a consultation paper on this in February. Many of the initial concerns regarding membership and board composition have already been addressed by One Call in making changes to their operations and requirements.

To further assist with the concerns regarding implementation and enforcement, we released regulatory proposals around these issues. The proposals are based on the feedback obtained during consultation and they're available for public comment until December 16. I invite all stakeholders—utilities, excavators, municipalities and so on—to give us that feedback, and the ministry will review and consider feedback received before we move forward.

This is a very important safety issue in this province that I take very seriously.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mrs. Jane McKenna: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Last week, the Canadian Automotive Partnership Council released a report on auto investment in North America. It found that Canada was not in first place, not in second, but in third, trailing Mexico as a destination of choice for industry investment.

This sector represents about 100,000 jobs, almost 30% of Ontario exports and a huge chunk of economic activity, and Mexico is eating our lunch. Billions in direct investment are flowing south of the border. This is a story that we've heard over and over again.

Most new employees get three months' probation. Your appointed Premier has had 10. When will the Premier make jobs a priority?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Deputy Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Again, I don't know where the member opposite is getting her information, but she needs to understand that we're on track for a record sales year in Canada for the automotive industry. In fact, we have bounced back so well since the bottom of the recession that we've created nearly 15,000 new jobs in the auto sector—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Part of that, of course, is the support that the federal and provincial governments have provided to the sector. Toyota, which is rolling out their hybrid version of the Lexus starting in January—a \$70-million investment we made; a nearly \$1-billion investment for Ford for their Oakville plant.

I had the privilege, actually, of hosting a gathering with the Minister of Industry, a federal minister. We attended and hosted a meeting with the Canadian Automotive Partnership Council just last week. The message we were hearing there was steady as she goes, continue

with the federal and provincial support. That sector is doing well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Tell that to the people in the unemployment line.

Deputy Premier, it's not a matter of whether you're doing something; it's a question of whether you're doing the right thing. It's a question of whether you're doing enough of the right thing.

Ontario has never been satisfied with a bronze medal. We should be reclaiming our rightful place at the top of the podium. We should own the podium! Haven't you lost enough businesses? If your government isn't bringing its A game, you will end up answering another question: How will you fill the economic footprint of Ontario's automotive industry?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated. Be seated, please.

Minister?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: This is ironic, because the party opposite voted against the support that we provided to the auto sector in 2008. If they would have had their way, GM and Chrysler wouldn't even be in this province. Instead, we have nearly 100,000 people proudly employed in the auto sector; in the spin-off jobs in terms of the supply chain, probably close to another half million—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Oxford, come to order.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: So I'm not going to take any lessons or advice from the party opposite in terms of the auto sector. We were there when they needed support prior to and during the recession. They've bounced back: nearly 15,000 more jobs since the bottom of the recession and a record sales year this year in Canada.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. New question

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. It concerns Stuart Clark and Alicia Grayson, constituents from my riding of London West who contacted the minister in October about delays accessing the Trillium Drug Program.

Alicia has complex medical needs with prescription drugs that cost between \$400 and \$500 a month. These costs used to be covered by Stuart's employment benefits, but like too many people in London West, Stuart was laid off more than a year ago.

In March 2013, Stuart applied to Trillium for drug coverage. Eight months later, his application has yet to be processed, after Trillium lost both the original and replacement documentation he sent. In Stuart's words, "It's almost as if they are hoping people give up."

Will the minister commit to addressing these unacceptable problems at Trillium so that Alicia Grayson can access the medications she needs?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am aware of this case, Speaker, and my constituency office and my ministry office have been working to get the access to medication that is appropriate for this couple and for others who access the Trillium plan. I think it's very important to know that we in Ontario do have a drug plan, which is very, very important for people who might not be covered but whose drug costs are very high relative to their income.

This is an issue that I am looking into, and I look forward to getting a resolution quickly.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I also look forward to a resolution.

The good news is that Stuart is working again in self-employment, but he has no benefits. As a result of the delays in accessing Trillium drug coverage, he's considering separating from his wife so that she can go on to ODSP to get her drug costs covered.

Minister, does it make sense to you that the problems at Trillium are potentially forcing people on to ODSP so they can get access to the life-saving medication they need?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said in the original question, this is an issue that we are looking into. Of course, I think when people are entitled to access under Trillium, they should get that coverage as quickly as possible. I tell you, if the system isn't working, Speaker, I will fix it. In this case, we are looking into this particular issue. We're here to serve people, and we're here to make sure that the people of Ontario get the drugs they need covered when they need that coverage.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1143 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: The class hasn't arrived yet, but I want to introduce Gillian Hutchison and her son William Perry. They're here today with École élémentaire Jeanne-Lajoie here in Toronto, and they will be in the Legislature in the next few minutes.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: It's my pleasure to introduce Madame Françoise Hébert, who is the former CEO of the Alzheimer Society, Toronto chapter, and is now with Dying With Dignity.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Earlier, I introduced many of the cast members and staff from Shaftesbury and from Murdoch Mysteries. While she was not able to make it this morning, she is here this afternoon, and I would like to ask the Legislature to welcome Hélène Joy, who plays in Murdoch Mysteries. She is over in the members' east gallery. I ask members to please welcome her.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I saw a couple of fans. Further introductions?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, I ask everyone in the assembly to join me in welcoming today a true hero, a human rights defender, someone who witnessed a geno-

cide that occurred in 1984 in Punjab and in Delhi. She has her son here with her, Mr. Gurdeep Singh. She lost her husband, her eldest son and her brother to a violence which occurred which was organized by the state in India. Mata Jagdish Kaur is here; I'll ask her to stand. Mr. Gurdeep Singh is here.

She's here to share her story of what has happened to her own family as well as many thousands of Sikhs in India. She wants to make it clear that it was not a communal violence; it was not a violence between people; it was government-organized state violence. She's here to share her story. Please join me in welcoming her.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

INTERPROVINCIAL TRADE

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I would also like to thank the cast and everyone from Murdoch Mysteries here this afternoon—big fan, so thank you very much for coming out.

I rise today to speak briefly about my new role as the PC opposition critic for interprovincial trade. In Canada, the agreement on internal trade has laid out the groundwork for what could be a vibrant and progressive free market national economy, with free movement of both labour and capital from coast to coast.

Very rarely is a country blessed with the diversity and abundance that we have access to here in Canada. I am taking it upon myself, going forward, to make sure that this government does everything in its power to take advantage of this uniqueness.

You could say I have already started the effort by my private member's bill, Bill 98, seeking to boost the grape and wine industry nationwide by making wine available for sale across borders to individuals for domestic consumption. This bill has the potential to build upon the 14,000 people already employed in this industry and bring job creation back to the province of Ontario.

With that in mind, stakeholders in my riding and across this country are asking me why this government is stalling Bill 98 in committee, and I can think of only one reason, and unfortunately, it's not uncommon or surprising at this point: Job creation and a flourishing economy simply aren't a priority for this government.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I rise today to address an issue that has been raised a number of times in my community. It's about auto insurance rates. We've seen a government that promised to follow through on the NDP demand in the budget to see auto insurance reduced by 15%. The problem is that people in my community and across Ontario aren't seeing that reduction yet. So we're calling on this government to follow through with their promise and ensure that the rates go down.

Another issue that's being raised is the fact that in committee hearings last week, when we were addressing this issue around auto insurance and the industry, we're seeing that the profits the industry is making are simply not being accurately reflected in the data we have. We have data that show very clearly that the insurance industry is making a significant profit. But the way that data is reflected, the way that data is presented, is not capturing the truth.

We call on this government to ensure that if we are to seriously bring down auto insurance rates, we need to make sure we have an accurate and true assessment of the profits the industry is enjoying so that we, as policy-makers, can make the right decisions to bring those rates down.

This is something that's a serious issue across Ontario. I know that in Peel region it's a significant issue. We have families who are struggling to pay their insurance bills, and that means they are having a hard time being able to afford the means to travel to their work. In Peel region and in many other suburbs, it's not a luxury; it's a necessity. People need to drive their vehicles to get to work, and we need to make that affordable.

JAGDISH KAUR

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I rise today to introduce Ms. Jagdish Kaur, who is currently visiting us from India.

Ms. Kaur has been hosted by many community organizations and families in my community of Brampton West and across the greater Toronto area.

It is with sadness that I share with this House that Ms. Kaur lost her whole family during the atrocities that took place in her home country. She has been welcomed to Ontario to share her story for justice and commitment to human rights.

Her visit is timely, since December 10 has been proclaimed Human Rights Day by the United Nations.

Human rights are fundamental in Ontario. Our success has been founded on our ability to work together through mutual respect and understanding.

I want to thank Ms. Kaur for bringing her story to Canada and welcome her to Ontario.

Remarks in Punjabi.

MAJOR WILLIAM HALTON

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Major William Halton came to Upper Canada, the present day Ontario, in 1806, as private secretary to Lieutenant Governor Sir Francis Gore.

Halton was named to the position of Provincial Agent and, in that role, became known for his courageous and charitable efforts to assist veterans and their families in Upper Canada in the aftermath of the War of 1812. The great esteem in which he was held by the people he served led to the naming of Halton county after him in 1816.

I'm proud to be able to say that the tradition of helping our veterans who fought for our country's freedoms, begun by Major Halton, continues throughout the region and municipality of Halton today; indeed, throughout Ontario.

Initially settled by United Empire Loyalists and immigrants from Britain, Halton region, Canada's fastest-growing municipality, is today a dynamic home to nearly half a million people of various backgrounds that reflect the Canadian multicultural mosaic.

Having lived a life of dedication to the people he was entrusted with the responsibility to serve, William Halton died on September 22, 1821.

That is why I have tabled my private member's bill, An Act to proclaim Major William Halton Day. On February 20, at second reading of Bill 142, I ask all members of the House to join me in celebrating the life of this hero of our province's history and enduring contemporary inspiration of the people of Halton and Ontario.

BLOOD DONATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I feel it is my duty to rise in this House and ring the alarm bell, this time on the subject of paying people for donating blood. In May of this year, I stood with a federal colleague and Mrs. Kat Lanteigne at a press conference to shed some light on the two for-profit plasma clinics that pay for donations, which have been built right here in Toronto. And as we speak, a third one is being built in Hamilton.

1310

For the last few weeks, Canadian Plasma Resources, the owner of those private for-profit clinics, have been soliciting donors. They give a lot of details as to how you will be paid for each donation, how much you can make in a week or in a month. It is of great concern to a lot of people in Ontario, especially the families directly affected by the tainted blood scandal of the 1980s. If we learned anything from this tainted blood scandal, where 2,000 people got infected with HIV and 30,000 people got hep C, it is that blood donated freely is the best way to keep it safe.

As soon as I learned about this, I reached across the aisle and went to the Minister of Health. This is something on which we must act together and in haste. Quebec has passed legislation that forbids payment for blood donations, yet Ontario is about to open the door and allow payments for donation.

Our system relies on voluntary donations and Ontarians rolling up their sleeves. This requires a sober second thought.

SHAFTESBURY

Mr. Bob Delaney: The Legislature welcomes entrepreneur Christina Jennings, a risk-taker who in 1987 founded an entertainment production firm called Shaftes-

bury. Based in Ontario, Shaftesbury's top-rated dramatic television series are Murdoch Mysteries, CBC Television's most-watched program, and The Listener, broadcast on CTV. They are seen in Canada and in more than 120 countries worldwide.

Also with us are Shaftesbury senior vice-president Scott Garvie, other members of Shaftesbury's management and production team, and Murdoch Mysteries cast members Yannick Bisson, Hélène Joy, Jonny Harris, Georgina Reilly, and periodic guest star and Mr. Bisson's spouse Chantal Craig.

Murdoch Mysteries alone has created more than 6,500 interesting, challenging, knowledge-intensive, rewarding, export-driven jobs for talent, production crews, writers, and technical and support services right here in Ontario since 2003. Christina Jennings has made Shaftesbury a thriving business. Viewers and critics have made stars of the cast and decided that Ontario-made shows like Murdoch Mysteries and The Listener are superb, enduring entertainment and award-winning Canadian television art.

Shaftesbury shows students of drama, digital technology, film and television production that a worldwide audience wants stories made about Canada in Ontario. Today is the bright tomorrow that the gang in Toronto Constabulary Station number 4 hope their great-grandchildren live in.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Steve Clark: I rise on behalf of the residents of Leeds–Grenville disgusted by the mess this Liberal government has made with Ontario's energy sector. No other issue comes close to matching the volume of calls, emails and letters that I receive about hydro. People are angry and they are worried about how they will afford to stay in their homes this winter as the cost to heat them soars. Meanwhile, the energy minister shrugs and says, "Get used to it." Rates are going up for the next 20 years.

But what he doesn't say is that his own billion-dollar gas plant scandal—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Attorney General, will you stop?

Mr. Steve Clark: —and outrageous wind and solar subsidies are to blame.

The Premier gets photo ops with Al Gore; the families and businesses I represent get stuck with the bill.

It's not just the cost, Speaker. The mismanagement extends to Hydro One and its inability to provide basic customer service by giving people accurate and timely bills. People don't get their bills for months, and when they do, the so-called estimates are five to 10 times their usual bill. Hydro's response to my inquiries is to send this new authorization form to further delay real action.

Well, my constituents don't need more forms or an energy minister blaming them for high bills and saying they're energy-illiterate. The problem isn't customer

illiteracy; it's Liberal government and Hydro incompetence.

So when he stands up today, I want to hear the minister's plan to put customers first, and if he doesn't, he should just sit down.

PALLIATIVE CARE

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: The issue of end-of-life health care needs to be addressed, and what better place than in this Legislature, where 107 constituencies are represented by elected members of Parliament?

It's time to hold a respectful conversation with the people of Ontario. We need to examine the continuum of end-of-life health care. We need to consult medical, nursing, ethical and legal experts. We need to hear from members of the public via public or private submissions. We need to hear their stories. We need to discuss access to high-quality palliative care at home, in hospice and in hospital settings. We need to talk about advanced care directives, the withholding or the withdrawal of potentially life-sustaining treatment. We need to talk about terminal palliative sedation and medical aid in dying.

Are these difficult conversations? Yes, they are. But are they necessary conversations? I say, yes, they are, as well. How often have I heard in my riding, where I've heard from individuals, from parents, from their children: "My wish," "My wish is," "Please listen." "My wish is, please understand." "My wish is, I need to be heard."

TOM THOMSON ART GALLERY

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm pleased to rise today in recognition of a major feat for a small-town gallery in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound that garners national stature in the art world. The Tom Thomson gallery in Owen Sound, also known as the TOM, and home of one of the Group of Seven, recently received top honours from the Ontario Arts Council and became one of just a few to earn the coveted "A" designation in Ontario. This rating will ensure the gallery is at the receiving end of steady funding from the OAC for the next two years.

As a supporter and patron of the TOM, I'm grateful to see the gallery's leadership is paying off.

The Tom Thomson memorial art gallery was established in 1967 as a result of a major gift from the Thomson family. Under the direction of Virginia Eichhorn and a strong team of staff and volunteers, the gallery has become synonymous with innovation and leadership, such as engaging the local community with fine art, establishing itself as a visual arts cultural centre and exploring ways of regionalizing activities.

The gallery has an increasing number of circulating exhibitions. Almost every show in the last year has travelled, whereas in the past it wouldn't have reached an audience wider than Bruce and Grey. Consequently, the gallery is successfully establishing itself as an integral part of the local economic engine.

And last but not least, I would like to also recognize that Ms. Eichhorn, who is currently the director and chief curator of the Tom Thomson Art Gallery and Owen Sound museums, assumed the role of president of the board for the Ontario Association of Art Galleries just as of last September. Ms. Eichhorn has been on the OAAG board since 2008, and has previously served as treasurer, vice-president and chair of the membership committee.

I again congratulate the TOM on this special milestone and invite everyone here and watching to visit the TOM and see what all this hype is truly about.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS, AUDITOR GENERAL

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to section 28 of the Auditor General Act, I have laid upon the table the audited financial statements of the Office of the Auditor General for the year ended March 31, 2013.

APPOINTMENT OF PROVINCIAL ADVOCATE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I further beg to inform the House I have laid upon the table order in council number 1762/2013, dated November 27, 2013, reappointing Irwin Elman as the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth.

MOTIONS

SIGN-LANGUAGE INTERPRETATION

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I believe that you'll find we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the use of sign-language interpreters in the House tomorrow.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader seeks unanimous consent to move a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I move that on Tuesday, December 3, 2013, sign-language interpreters may be present on the floor of the chamber to interpret the proceedings during Minister Hoskins's, the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment, ministerial statement on the International Day of People with Disabilities and responses to that statement.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Milloy moves unanimous consent that on Tuesday, December 3—

Hon. John Milloy: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Do we—dispense.

Do we agree? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. John Milloy: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Agreed? Agreed.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I move that notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item number 65 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Milloy moves that notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item number 65 be waived.

Do we agree? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I move that pursuant to standing order 6(c)(ii), the House shall meet from 6:45 to 12 o'clock midnight tonight, Monday, December 2, 2013.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Milloy moves that pursuant to standing order 6(c)(ii), the House shall meet from 6:45 to 12 midnight on Monday, December 2. Do we agree? I heard—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Come on. Let me do my job. I heard a no.

All in favour, say "aye."

All opposed, say "nay."

I believe the ayes have it.

Call in the members. That will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1322 to 1327.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Would all members take their seats, please? All members take their seats, please. That's you.

Mr. Milloy has moved motion number 25.

All those in favour, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bradley, James J.
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic

Dickson, Joe
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fraser, John
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hoskins, Eric
Hunter, Mitzie
Jaczek, Helena
Kwintner, Monte
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Matthews, Deborah
McMeekin, Ted

McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Moridi, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Oraziotti, David
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hudak, Tim	Pettapiece, Randy
Arnott, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	Prue, Michael
Bailey, Robert	Klees, Frank	Sattler, Peggy
Bisson, Gilles	Leone, Rob	Schein, Jonah
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLeod, Lisa	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	Mantha, Michael	Shurman, Peter
DiNovo, Cheri	McDonnell, Jim	Singh, Jagmeet
Dunlop, Garfield	McKenna, Jane	Smith, Todd
Elliott, Christine	McNaughton, Monte	Tabuns, Peter
Fife, Catherine	Miller, Norm	Taylor, Monique
Forster, Cindy	Miller, Paul	Thompson, Lisa M.
Gélinas, France	Milligan, Rob E.	Vanthof, John
Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia	Walker, Bill
Hatfield, Percy	Natyshak, Taras	Yakabuski, John
Hillier, Randy	Nicholls, Rick	Yurek, Jeff
Holyday, Douglas C.	O'Toole, John	
Horwath, Andrea	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

Bailey, Robert	Klees, Frank	Sattler, Peggy
Bisson, Gilles	Leone, Rob	Schein, Jonah
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLeod, Lisa	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	Mantha, Michael	Shurman, Peter
DiNovo, Cheri	McDonnell, Jim	Singh, Jagmeet
Dunlop, Garfield	McKenna, Jane	Smith, Todd
Elliott, Christine	McNaughton, Monte	Tabuns, Peter
Fife, Catherine	Miller, Norm	Taylor, Monique
Forster, Cindy	Miller, Paul	Thompson, Lisa M.
Gélinas, France	Milligan, Rob E.	Vanthof, John
Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia	Walker, Bill
Hatfield, Percy	Natyshak, Taras	Yakabuski, John
Hillier, Randy	Nicholls, Rick	Yurek, Jeff
Holyday, Douglas C.	O'Toole, John	
Horwath, Andrea	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 40; the nays are 49.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I move that pursuant to standing order 6(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 to 9:30 p.m. tonight, Monday, December 2, 2013.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Milloy moves that pursuant to standing order 6(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 to 9:30 p.m. on Monday, December 2, 2013. Do we agree? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1331 to 1336.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Would all the members take their seats, please?

Mr. Milloy has moved motion number 24. All those in favour, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Dickson, Joe	McNeely, Phil
Balkissoon, Bas	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Meilleur, Madeleine
Bartolucci, Rick	Fraser, John	Milloy, John
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gerretsen, John	Moridi, Reza
Bradley, James J.	Gravelle, Michael	Murray, Glen R.
Cansfield, Donna H.	Hoskins, Eric	Naqvi, Yasir
Chiarelli, Bob	Hunter, Mitzie	Oraziotti, David
Colle, Mike	Jaczek, Helena	Piruzza, Teresa
Coteau, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Crack, Grant	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Damerla, Dipika	MacCharles, Tracy	Wong, Soo
Del Duca, Steven	Mangat, Amrit	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Delaney, Bob	Matthews, Deborah	Zimmer, David
Dhillon, Vic	McMeekin, Ted	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hudak, Tim	Pettapiece, Randy
Arnott, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	Prue, Michael

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 41; the nays are 49.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

Mr. Todd Smith: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order, the member from Prince Edward–Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I believe that since we have everyone here, maybe we would like to have unanimous consent for an afternoon edition of question period.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings has asked for an afternoon session of question period. Do I hear agreement? I heard a no.

It is now time for statements by ministries.

**STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES****ENERGY POLICIES
POLITIQUES D'ÉNERGIE**

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, today the government is releasing our updated long-term energy plan, Achieving Balance. Ontario's electricity and energy system has been through an incredible journey over the past two decades and has emerged stronger than ever before. Achieving Balance leverages the strength and diversity of Ontario's supply mix to ensure Ontario consumers, families and businesses will have clean, reliable and affordable power when and where they need it.

Ontario's government is focused on investing in people, investing in infrastructure and fostering a dynamic business climate, and I'm proud to report that Achieving Balance works toward each of these goals.

Our plan is the culmination of months of work, which began the day the new government was sworn in last February. Robust and diverse consultation and engagement efforts underpinned our ministry's summer activities, and I can say with confidence that this has truly been a collaborative effort.

Les Ontariens peuvent être assurés que ce gouvernement fera des choix prudents et responsables

visant à maintenir notre réseau énergétique propre, fiable et abordable.

First, our plan imposes a rigorous, needs-based assessment to building new sources of generation as our surplus capacity allows us to defer major new capital investments that would drive electricity prices up. Our government took the steps necessary to invest in both transmission and generation after a decade of neglect by the former Conservative government that resulted in a deficit of supply. That puts us in the fortunate position we find ourselves in today: a stable and reliable system, a surplus of supply, and energy companies investing in the system and creating jobs that drive economic growth.

Moving forward, we will protect these gains and limit our capital investment to what is absolutely required to avoid building capacity we do not need. This will mitigate rate pressures for Ontario ratepayers, rather than create price pressures. The plan predicts a lower level of demand than had been projected in 2010, and private sector energy experts agree.

It is important to note that low growth in electricity demand does not equal low economic growth. Growing economic activity in advanced manufacturing, technology and other sectors are less energy-intensive than traditional manufacturing. In fact, from a power system planning perspective, reductions in demand can be extremely advantageous. If we can continue to support a robust and growing economy with less energy, then overall, Ontario's net productivity will actually increase.

In sum, our plan commits only to what we need and preserves maximum flexibility to respond in the future. Added flexibility will flow from a new annual Ontario Energy Report, starting in 2014, to be issued by the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Power Authority. This will give Ontarians an update of the energy supply and demand picture and allow the government and others to review progress in implementing the long-term energy plan. The plan will continue to be updated on a three-year cycle, but these annual reports will give everyone an opportunity to monitor progress and understand developments, and enable course corrections that may be required.

Consistent with our Open Government Initiative, our planning will be open, transparent and subject to the highest degree of scrutiny. The annual Ontario Energy Report will do this. Importantly, as we adopt a more responsive and flexible approach, system planning collaboration and more timely adjustments will become the norm.

Second, the cost curve and electricity prices: After years of neglect and underinvestment under the previous Conservative government, our government invested in new transmission and generation infrastructure in the amount of \$31 billion over nine years. This included principled action to green the sources of generation, first by closing Ontario's dirty coal plants, and later by integrating renewables such as biomass, wind and solar into the provincial electricity grid.

As a result of the Green Energy Act, Ontario now boasts 31,000 clean energy jobs in communities across

the province, while creating a solar and wind manufacturing base in Ontario that is now poised to help supply the world.

Ontario's coal-fired plants cost the people of Ontario an estimated \$4.4 billion per year in health, environmental and financial damages. Our \$31 billion of strategic investments moved our system from deficit to surplus, from polluting coal to clean energy, and Ontario rates were consequently under significant price pressure as a result of these necessary investments.

However, we are pleased to announce that Achieving Balance projects costs significantly lower than those which had been projected in the 2010 plan. These lower projections are as a result of more modest demand projections and also include strong actions this government has already taken in the last nine months, including renegotiating the Samsung agreement, saving ratepayers \$3.7 billion over the life of the contract; changing the domestic content rules in the feed-in tariff program, saving ratepayers more than \$1.9 billion over the life of the contracts; deferring the construction of two nuclear reactors, avoiding an estimated \$15 billion in new construction costs; introducing dispatching rules for wind generators, saving ratepayers over \$200 million annually; and also negotiating lower contract prices for non-utility generators coming up for renewal.

Moving forward, Mr. Speaker, our long-term energy plan will continue to put rate mitigation at the forefront of all energy policy decisions.

Achieving Balance now predicts that the total cumulative cost of electricity service is expected to be lower than the previous 2010 forecast by \$16 billion in the near term—that's 2013 to 2017—and \$70 billion over the life of the plan, 2013 to 2030. This means an average residential customer can expect to pay about \$520 less than the forecast in 2010 in the near term and \$3,800 less over the life of this plan. The typical large industrial consumer is expected to pay \$3 million less than previously forecast in the near term, and \$11 million less over the life of the plan.

These are the results of prudent planning and concrete measures our government is taking to put the interests of consumers at the forefront of our planning efforts.

Third, we are leveraging our diverse supply mix to ensure we continue to have a balanced mix of sources of generation in the future. Most importantly, the Ministry of Energy will work with its agencies to ensure that they put an emphasis on delivering on our government's Conservation First agenda. This means we will undertake all cost-effective conservation measures before investing in new generation capital. We will place a high priority on demand response and demand management.

At the same time, we will secure stable, affordable and reliable baseload electricity generation by prudently managing the province's nuclear fleet.

Therefore, nuclear refurbishment will begin at both Darlington and Bruce generating stations in 2016 and will be subject to the strictest possible oversight to ensure safety and value for ratepayers. The refurbishment

schedule is phased, and construction deadlines and budgets must be adhered to in order for the next stage of refurbishment to move forward.

On the renewables side, by 2025, the plan directs that 20,000 megawatts of renewable energy will be online, representing about half of Ontario's installed capacity. To meet this target, Ontario will phase in wind, solar and bioenergy over a longer period than contemplated in the 2010 plan, with 10,700 megawatts online by 2021. We will also extend the hydroelectricity target, increasing the province's portfolio to 9,300 megawatts by 2025.

1350

As well, Ontario will undertake targeted procurements for combined heat and power projects—

Interjection.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli:—including, Mr. Rural Affairs, a new program targeting greenhouse operations, agri-food and district energy.

Fourth, and finally, Ontario will continue to enhance our transmission system's reliability and efficiency by reinforcing the grid with necessary projects province-wide. Of particular note is our plan's strong emphasis on northern Ontario. For the northwest alone, in partnership with regional businesses and First Nations leadership, \$2.2 billion will be invested in regional transmission and create nearly 1,700 jobs over the course of the next decade.

Across the board, all aspects of our conservation, generation and transmission planning will pay dividends in the medium and long-term by continuing to add clean, renewable generation to our supply mix. This will be accomplished at a more moderate and measured pace to ensure that we do not overcommit Ontario ratepayers in the near term.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all those who participated in the drafting of our updated long-term energy plan, including industrial experts, private sector leaders, aboriginal communities, municipalities and local distribution companies, as well as partner ministries. This has truly been a collaborative effort.

Finally, I would like to thank Deputy Minister Serge Imbrogno and his dedicated team of professional and diligent staff, without whom Achieving Balance would not have been possible. I'm going to ask Serge to stand up and take one for the team.

Applause.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Thank you for the commitment with all of the agencies and all of your staff.

As we set the course for the next two decades, Ontarians can be assured that this government is making prudent, responsible choices to ensure that we maintain our clean, reliable and affordable energy system. For 13 and a half million Ontarians, they deserve nothing less. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Statements by ministries? It is now time for responses.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure to rise today and respond to this short-term energy plan on behalf of Tim Hudak and the next Progressive Conservative government of the province of Ontario.

Speaker, this government here has a lot of nerve to come into this assembly today and tell Ontarians that they are not going to be paying as much as they had originally projected, given Ontario's last decade of decline. In fact, I think Achieving Balance should be called "The Decade of Decline," and here's why: Right now, the media is trying to calculate how much this is actually going to cost. Is it 36% more, according to the government's numbers, or 50% more, according to the auditor's numbers? We know this government pretended that they were going to create 50,000 new jobs as a result of the Green Energy Act. How many have we seen? We might as well say zero, because the auditor himself, the previous auditor, said to us that for every job that was created as a result of green energy, we lost three in the province of Ontario.

We have lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs in this province. Why? Predominantly because of high energy rates and high costs. Last week, I read into the assembly a very important document. The Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers' Association sent to me their quote: "More recently ... a combination of factors—not the least of which is revised policy goals—have converged to make Ontario rates higher than competing jurisdictions." This is important, Speaker: "For example, electricity costs for a typical large scale assembly operation in the US ... Midwest are estimated to be as much as \$5 million lower than those in Ontario..."

What does that mean? It means ratepayers in Toronto, those large power users, pay 123% more than in Chicago, 50% more than in Nashville, and 37% more than in Detroit. That is a problem for our manufacturing base, and that is why our manufacturers deserve more than a short-term energy plan by a political minister and need a long-term energy plan from a government that is prepared to make the tough decisions and ensure that we have an appropriate energy supply in the province of Ontario.

According to many of the stakeholders I have spoken to, the LTEP is nothing more than a candy store—something for everyone—procuring 300 megawatts of wind and 140 megawatts of solar in 2014 and 2015, even though the province does not need the power. You only have to listen to the minister when he talks about nuclear. They are going to triple the amount of wind power. I do not have to tell this minister how people across the province of Ontario have reacted to his wind power policy. They are tired of it, they can't afford it, they want it to stop, and that's what Tim Hudak will do.

The 87-page LTEP is a frank admission of this government's failed economic agenda. It abandons any pretense of an economic growth and prosperity plan that we need, to get this province back on track. I moved to this province because it was an economic generator for all of Confederation. They have made it sputter along, based on their industrial policy, based on their energy policy.

This report commits the province to annual progress reports, but the LTEP is silent on who takes responsibility if the targets are not met. Speaker, we have seen time

and time and time again, whether it's the \$1.1-billion gas plant boondoggle, whether it's the \$1 billion at Ornge, whether it's the \$1 billion at eHealth, that there is no accountability in this government. They have never met a target that they wanted to miss.

Speaker, I must say—and let's go back to the gas plants—I find it passing strange that this government, on the heels of the Premier attending gas plant hearings tomorrow, would decide to have a major shift in energy policy today, or might I say a minor shift in energy policy today. I think this is a sidestep; I think that this is a distraction. But I can commit to you today, Speaker, that this Progressive Conservative Party will continue to defend the taxpayers in this province and will continue to defend the ratepayers in this province, and we will hold that Premier accountable tomorrow, with or without this short-term energy plan.

Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about what Tim Hudak would do. This is where it really comes into long-term planning for energy in this province. This is where we start to protect consumers of energy, whether it's the single mother in Barrhaven, whether it is the senior in Muskoka, or whether it's that manufacturer who wants to build good Ontario products right here. We have a plan, and let me tell you a little bit about it.

We would end those handsome FIT subsidies. We'd make sure that we aren't paying any more for power that we don't need. We would make sure that we have sensible trade agreements with neighbouring jurisdictions, so we are not being outbid when it comes to getting them to settle here. We have a commitment to nuclear. We're not cancelling; we're not deferring; we're committing to nuclear. And we will make sure that we monetize some of those crown assets.

Speaker, we have a plan. Tim Hudak has a plan. Tim Hudak, when he's Premier, will make sure we implement that plan. Thank you.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity to address the Minister of Energy's plan that he has presented to us today. I know we're in the presence of many of those who are deeply concerned in and involved with the energy system in this province.

Speaker, approximately a century ago, Ontario's business leadership, its civic leadership and its citizens understood what it would take to build a prosperous economy in this part of North America.

There were huge fights over our energy direction. Coal interests tried to block the development of hydro power from Niagara Falls coming into London, into Toronto, into Hamilton.

Speaker, we understood a century ago that to build an industrial economy here in Ontario, we needed power, offered on a non-profit basis, using renewable energy as its heart. Frankly, Speaker, that was the base for building what became one of the most prosperous, one of the most civilized, one of the most—what can I say? The superlatives elude me, but it was a province that, in fact, was meeting the promise that its people wanted to have kept.

A century later, the Ontario Liberal Party has forgotten about that promise. Instead of learning what it

took to build an industrial economy, it has continued with a decade of privatization. It has carried forward the Conservative plan for privatization of our electricity system.

Today in Ontario, people, families and businesses, in each and every hydro bill they pay, are covering about a billion dollars in profit for private power generators. This was an expense that they didn't have to cover 15 years ago.

1400

The Liberals didn't have to continue the privatization plans of the Conservatives, but they did, and we're paying for it. This plan doesn't address the need to go back to public ownership in any new development or any new investment. We could be using Ontario Power Generation as a sophisticated, broadly based corporation to develop new power as we need it and to drive energy conservation, but instead we are continuing with the privatization agenda that the Conservatives and Liberals both find so dear to their hearts. It is inevitable that people will be paying more for electricity than they should and more than they can afford.

With the debacle in Mississauga and Oakville, we have seen that privatization doesn't transfer risk out of public hands; in fact, it means that we are stuck covering risk. We gave up any protections we would have when those plants were cancelled. We got stuck with the costs, including paying 60% interest on penalty clauses for the Mississauga plant.

This government clearly sees private power interests and the interest of getting some of its members elected far ahead of the interests of ordinary families and businesses in this province. In its plan, it shows that conservation is the lowest-cost option, but has ignored that for a decade, and so we carry a higher cost than we should or could have, and still conservation is a sidebar.

Most people in this province will be concerned with the cost, and they have good reason. But I note that this plan, although it is the end of burning coal, will not allow Ontario to meet its greenhouse gas reduction targets because we will be burning so much gas as the nuclear plants are being refurbished. That's why this government stopped promoting or printing its greenhouse gas practices, its targets and its performance.

This is not a plan that's going to address climate change adaptation. Maybe it's lost somewhere in the text; I haven't found it yet. This past summer, we lost power in west Toronto because of the flooding of a major transformer station. That kind of extreme weather is going to become more and more common. This government is ignoring that. This plan is not the plan that Ontario needs.

PETITIONS

CHARITABLE GAMING

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario, through the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, levies the Ontario provincial fee on the sale of break-open tickets by charitable and non-profit organizations in the province; and

"Whereas local hospital auxiliaries/associations across the province, who are members of the Hospital Auxiliaries Association of Ontario, use break-open tickets to raise funds to support local health care equipment needs in more than 100 communities across the province; and

"Whereas in September 2010, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario announced a series of changes to the Ontario provincial fee which included a reduction of the fee for certain organizations and the complete elimination of the fee for other organizations, depending on where the break-open tickets are sold; and

"Whereas the September 2010 changes to the Ontario provincial fee unfairly treat certain charitable and non-profit organizations (local hospital auxiliaries) by not providing for the complete elimination of the fee which would otherwise be used by these organizations to increase their support for local health care equipment needs and other community needs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to eliminate the Ontario provincial fee on break-open tickets for all charitable and non-profit organizations in Ontario and allow all organizations using this fundraising tool to invest more funds in local community projects, including local health care equipment needs, for the benefit of Ontarians."

I affix my name in support.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there are over 8,000 children and youth living under the care of the crown and of children's aid societies in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario Legislature hosted the 'Our Voice, Our Turn: Youth Leaving Care Hearings' in the fall of 2011; and

"Whereas these hearings made it clear that more must be done to support these young people and to raise awareness; and

"Whereas by proclaiming May 14 of each year as 'Children and Youth in Care Day,' the province would raise awareness and recognize the unique challenges faced by children and youth living in care; and

"Whereas Ontario's children's aid societies, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, and members of the community, including children and youth living in care, want to officially celebrate 'Children and Youth in Care Day' on May 14, 2014; and

"Whereas Bill 53, known as the 'Children and Youth in Care Day Act,' proposed by MPP Soo Wong, passed with unanimous support on May 9, 2013, but has since been delayed from being called for third reading;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario call Bill 53 for third reading immediately; and

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact Bill 53, the Children and Youth in Care Day Act, before May 2014."

I fully support the petition, and I will give the petition to Payton.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition for the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas Kimm Fletcher, a mother of two diagnosed with brain cancer, has been prescribed with the drug Avastin to help prolong her life;

"Whereas the Ontario health ministry's Committee to Evaluate Drugs (CED) has indicated that the use of this drug is associated with higher, progression-free survival rates;

"Whereas this drug is not covered under OHIP—but is in other provincial jurisdictions;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario Parliament call on the Premier and her health minister to extend OHIP funding of the drug Avastin, so that Kimm Fletcher, and others like her, can have as much time to enjoy with her family as possible; and to tell the Wynne administration that 'Our health care system includes Kimm Fletcher.'"

I sign this petition and pass it to my page.

WASTE REDUCTION

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: "Whereas protecting the environment should be everyone's responsibility, including manufacturing and material producing companies; and

"Whereas it is important to require producers to be financially and environmentally responsible for recycling the goods and packaging they sell in Ontario, and to divert these wastes from landfill to recycling to drive innovation, generate new jobs, and new Ontario-made products; and

"Whereas new approaches are needed that reflect ideas and recommendations from the recycling sector that are designed to improve current recycling systems, to increase recycling and diversion rates, and better protect our environment;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act, 2013, introduced on June 6, 2013, by the Ontario Minister of Environment."

I will sign this petition and give it to page Jeffrey.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. I

wish I had been first, because the Minister of Energy was here.

"Whereas Hydro One Networks Inc. (Hydro One) is proposing construction of a new transformer station on a 100-acre site in Clarington, near the Oshawa-Clarington boundary;

"Whereas the site is on the Oak Ridges moraine/greenbelt;

"Whereas concerns have been raised about the environmental impacts of this development, including harm to wildlife as well as contamination of ponds, streams and the underground water supply;

"Whereas sites zoned for industrial and/or commercial use are the best locations for large electricity transformer stations;

"Whereas most, if not all, residents do not agree this project is needed and that, if proven to be necessary, it could be best accommodated at" an alternative location "such as Cherrywood...;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Ontario Legislature support the preservation of the Oak Ridges moraine, the greenbelt and the natural environment at this site. We also ask that the Ontario Legislature require the Clarington transformer station to be built at an alternative location zoned for an industrial facility and selected in accordance with the best planning principles."

I am pleased to sign and support this petition and present it to Spencer, on his ninth-last day here in the Legislature.

1410

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

Mr. John Vanthof: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a motion was introduced at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads 'that in the opinion of the House, the operation of off-road vehicles on highways under regulation 316/03 be changed to include side-by-side off-road vehicles, four-seat side-by-side vehicles, and two-up vehicles in order for them to be driven on highways under the same conditions as other off-road/all-terrain vehicles';

"Whereas this motion was passed on November 7, 2013, to amend the Highway Traffic Act 316/03;

"Whereas the economic benefits will have positive impacts on ATV clubs, ATV manufacturers, dealers and rental shops, and will boost revenues to communities promoting this outdoor activity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the Ministry of Transportation to implement this regulation immediately."

I wholeheartedly agree and will send it down with page Yong Da.

DISTRACTED DRIVING

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 'texting while driving' is one of the single biggest traffic safety concerns of Ontarians;

"Whereas text messaging is the cause for drivers to be 23 times more likely to be in a motor vehicle accident;

"Whereas talking on a cellphone is found to be four to five times more likely for a driver to be involved in an accident;

"Whereas Ontario is only one of few provinces in Canada where there are no demerit points assessed under the current cellphone/distracted driving legislation currently in place;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To adopt Bill 116 by MPP Balkissoon into law, which calls for each individual guilty of an offence and on conviction to be 'liable to a fine of not less than \$300 and not more than \$700,' in addition to a record of three demerit points for each offence."

I will sign this pledge and give it to page Najat.

TIRE DISPOSAL

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario government has approved massive increases to Ontario Tire Stewardship's eco fees for agricultural tires, increasing some fees from \$15.29 to \$352.80, \$546.84 or" to an amazing "\$1,311.24;

"Whereas Ontario imposes tire eco fees that are dramatically higher than those in other provinces;

"Whereas other provincial governments either exempt agricultural tires from recycling programs or charge fees only up to \$75;

"Whereas these new fees will result in increased costs for our farmers and lost sales for our farm equipment dealerships;

"Whereas the PC caucus has proposed a new plan that holds manufacturers and importers of tires responsible for recycling, but gives them the freedom to work with other businesses to find the best way possible to carry out that responsibility;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To suspend the decision to significantly increase Ontario Tire Stewardship's fees on agricultural and off-the-road tires pending a thorough impact study and implementation of proposals to lower costs."

I agree with this and I will be passing it off to the page.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over the northeast.

"Whereas the Ontario government has made ... PET scanning a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients ... ; and

"Whereas since ... 2009, insured PET scans are performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital"—Health Sciences North—"its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through Health Sciences North, thereby serving and providing equitable access" to the residents of northeastern Ontario.

I fully support this petition and will affix my name to it and ask page Niam to bring it to the Clerk.

WASTE REDUCTION

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas protecting the environment should be everyone's responsibility, including manufacturing and material producing companies; and

"Whereas it is important to require producers to be financially and environmentally responsible for recycling the goods and packaging they sell in Ontario, and to divert these wastes from landfill to recycling to drive innovation, generate new jobs, and new Ontario-made products; and

"Whereas new approaches are needed that reflect ideas and recommendations from the recycling sector that are designed to improve current recycling systems, to increase recycling and diversion rates, and better protect our environment;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act, 2013, introduced on June 6, 2013, by the Ontario Minister of Environment."

I fully support the petition. I will give the petition to page Cynthia.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean Program was implemented only as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

"Whereas vehicle emissions have declined so significantly from 1998 to 2010 that they are no longer among the major domestic contributors of smog in Ontario; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions is the result of factors other than Drive Clean, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

"Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error; and

"Whereas the new Drive Clean test has caused the failure rate to double in less than two months as a result of technical problems with the new emissions testing method; and

"Whereas this new emissions test has caused numerous false 'fails,' which have resulted in the overcharging of testing fees for Ontario drivers and car dealerships, thereby causing unwarranted economic hardship and stress;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment takes immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program."

I'm pleased to affix my signature in support and send the petition to the table with page Payton, whose birthday was yesterday.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over Ontario:

"Whereas there are a growing number of reported cases of abuse, neglect and substandard care for our seniors in long-term-care homes; and

"Whereas people with complaints have limited options, and frequently they don't complain because they fear repercussions, which suggests too many seniors are being left in vulnerable situations without independent oversight; and

"Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada—including the three territories—where our Ombudsman does not have independent oversight of long-term-care homes;"

They ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to "expand the Ombudsman's mandate to include Ontario's long-term-care homes in order to protect our most vulnerable seniors."

I fully support this petition and will affix my name to it and ask our good page Jeffery to bring it to the Clerk.

TIRE DISPOSAL

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government has approved massive increases to Ontario Tire Stewardship's eco fees for agricultural tires, increasing some fees from \$15.29 to \$352.80, \$546.84 or \$1,311.24; and

"Whereas Ontario imposes tire eco fees that are dramatically higher than those in other provinces; and

"Whereas other provincial governments either exempt agricultural tires from recycling programs or charge fees only up to \$75; and

"Whereas these new fees will result in increased costs for our farmers and lost sales for our farm equipment dealerships; and

"Whereas the PC caucus has proposed a new plan that holds manufacturers and importers of tires responsible

for recycling, but gives them the freedom to work with other businesses to find the best way possible to carry out that responsibility;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to please suspend the decision to significantly increase Ontario Tire Stewardship’s fees on agricultural and off-the-road tires pending a thorough impact study and implementation of proposals to lower costs.”

I fully support it and will send it with page Morgan.

DEATH OF POLICE OFFICER

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Scarborough—Agincourt on a point of order.

Ms. Soo Wong: On a point of order: I seek unanimous consent for a moment of silence. I just heard that an officer in the city of Toronto just passed away. I’m seeking unanimous consent for us to have one minute of silence.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Agreed? Agreed.

The House observed one minute’s silence.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SCHOOL BOARDS COLLECTIVE BARGAINING ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA NÉGOCIATION COLLECTIVE DANS LES CONSEILS SCOLAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 27, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 122, An Act respecting collective bargaining in Ontario’s school system / Projet de loi 122, Loi concernant la négociation collective dans le système scolaire de l’Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. John Milloy: I’m pleased to stand today to participate in this debate about Bill 122. I want to take a minute to remind members in the House about where we are in terms of the debate around this bill. It’s something that has been discussed quite frequently here in the Legislature, and I just want to share some of the statistics with this House.

This bill was introduced over a month and a half ago. Since that time, the bill has seen significant periods of debate in the House. Thirty-two members, according to our count, have now had the opportunity to speak to this bill; 59 members have participated in the debate through questions and comments. In listening to the debate, it seems clear—

Mr. John O’Toole: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Durham.

Mr. John O’Toole: This is a contradiction. He called Bill 122, and he is not speaking to the purpose of the bill, so he’s really out of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Unfortunately, I don’t find that there’s a valid point of order. I return to the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, in listening to the debate, and if you review Hansard, you would find that it seems clear that the majority of this House is in support of this bill. Yet the official opposition have been intent on continuing this debate, and their only goal seems to be delay. Only the official opposition continues to put up speakers, and as they continue to put up speakers, they have been playing procedural games, ringing bells, asking for adjournment of the House and adjournment of the debate and then not even voting for their own motions. Surely this signals that there is no true desire to have further meaningful debate on this bill.

This bill has already been debated for some 14 hours, and it is time that it comes to a vote. It’s time that it goes to a committee. There is, as members are aware, some time sensitivity to this bill. The next round of collective bargaining in the education sector is fast approaching. Current contracts expire in August 2014, meaning that the collective bargaining process will need to begin early next year. It’s important that there is some certainty with respect to that bargaining process—something that this bill, if passed, would create. It is therefore very important that the committee begin its process as soon as possible.

At the same time, the House can move on to debate other substantive matters that are being stalled as a result of the official opposition’s procedural games on Bill 122.

For example, Bill 21, the Employment Standards Amendment Act: We’d like to be able to conclude third reading stage of this bill.

Bill 83, the Protection of Public Participation Act, an important piece of legislation that aims to tackle strategic lawsuits that curb democratic rights: We’d like to spend more time debating that legislation.

Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act, an important job-creating piece of legislation that we would like to see move into committee—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I’m sorry to interrupt the government House leader, but he needs to come back to Bill 122 if he’s going to participate in debate on Bill 122.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I will simply say that the list goes on; there are ample examples of legislation that is being stalled because of the excessive debate.

There has been ample debate on Bill 122, and I move that this question be now put.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): This House stands in recess for 10 minutes while the Speaker considers the matter.

The House recessed from 1424 to 1437.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I wish to inform the House that I’ve come to my decision. We are in the ninth day of debate on second reading of Bill 122; 32 members have spoken for almost 14 hours of debate.

This is in excess of previous statistics when closure motions have, in fact, been allowed. Therefore, I am going to allow the motion.

Mr. Milloy has moved that the question now be put. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1438 to 1508.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the members to please take their seats.

Mr. Milloy has moved that the question now be put. All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be counted by the table staff.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Dickson, Joe	McMeekin, Ted
Balkissoon, Bas	Duguid, Brad	McNeely, Phil
Bartolucci, Rick	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Meilleur, Madeleine
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Fraser, John	Milloy, John
Bradley, James J.	Gravelle, Michael	Murray, Glen R.
Cansfield, Donna H.	Hoskins, Eric	Naqvi, Yasir
Chiarelli, Bob	Hunter, Mitzi	Oraziotti, David
Colle, Mike	Jaczek, Helena	Plruzza, Teresa
Coteau, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Crack, Grant	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Damerla, Dipika	MacCharles, Tracy	Wong, Soo
Del Duca, Steven	Mangat, Amrit	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Delaney, Bob	Matthews, Deborah	Zimmer, David
Dhillon, Vic	Mauro, Bill	

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time.

Nays

Bailey, Robert	Klees, Frank	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Chudleigh, Ted	Leone, Rob	Pettapiece, Randy
Clark, Steve	McDonnell, Jim	Scott, Laurie
Dunlop, Garfield	McKenna, Jane	Shurman, Peter
Elliott, Christine	McNaughton, Monte	Smith, Todd
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Norm	Walker, Bill
Hillier, Randy	Milligan, Rob E.	Yakabuski, John
Holyday, Douglas C.	Munro, Julia	Yurek, Jeff
Hudak, Tim	Nicholls, Rick	
Jones, Sylvia	O'Toole, John	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 41; the nays are 28.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion carried.

Mrs. Sandals has moved second reading of Bill 122, An Act respecting collective bargaining in Ontario's school system. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a "no."

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

I wish to inform the House that I have received a request for deferral from the chief government whip and,

as such, this vote will be deferred until tomorrow, Tuesday, December 3, at the time of deferred votes.

Second reading vote deferred.

PROTECTION OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA PROTECTION DU DROIT À LA PARTICIPATION AUX AFFAIRES PUBLIQUES

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 28, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 83, An Act to amend the Courts of Justice Act, the Libel and Slander Act and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act in order to protect expression on matters of public interest / *Projet de loi 83, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les tribunaux judiciaires, la Loi sur la diffamation et la Loi sur l'exercice des compétences légales afin de protéger l'expression sur les affaires d'intérêt public.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I always like to begin debate in this House when I have the opportunity to speak by saying that it's a privilege for me to rise in my place on behalf of the people who live in my community of Vaughan, to add my voice to the discussions that are taking place, and I am looking forward to taking some of my time this afternoon to delve deeper or to dive deeper into the discussion specifically around Bill 83.

But I have to say, because at least in part this particular legislation does deal with very important matters of procedure and process around a very important aspect of a strong, fair society, that I know for the people from my community of Vaughan who are watching at home today it must be extremely disappointing to see that at various times this afternoon, as members of this government tried to stand in our places to encourage continued deliberation and debate over the course of the evenings for the last two weeks that the House is sitting before our recess, members of both opposition parties stood in their places to thwart the attempts of the government to continue to do the people's business. I'm sure, for those watching, whether they are from my community of Vaughan or from places all over the province of Ontario, there must have been a great deal of disappointment that we weren't able to come together on the importance of making sure that we keep moving very important legislation through this Legislature. It is unfortunate, but I suppose not surprising, certainly not to those of us on this side of the House, because we have seen over the last number of days, and not for the first time, members of the opposition repeatedly standing in their places to play the procedural games and to sort of open up that bag of tricks to try to delay at every attempt the ongoing deliberation and discussion of very important legislation that is before this House.

The bill that we are here to discuss now, Bill 83, the Protection of Public Participation Act, is something that's

extremely important. Right in the title of this bill, "Public Participation Act" again speaks to the fact that we are here with a responsibility and a mandate from the people of our respective communities to move discussion through this place, to have sound, sober deliberation about how we want to move the province forward. When people in my community and in other communities like Scarborough and Ottawa and North York and Ajax and Whitby see members of the opposing parties play these tricks, I know that they're disappointed.

With respect to Bill 83, the bill that is before us today to discuss, I want to say that I am very proud to be part of a government that has sought to move forward on the recommendations of a very important, very influential panel that was struck a couple of years ago regarding this very important matter.

Before I get into the heart or the meat of my particular remarks, I do want to spend a moment to pay tribute to one of my colleagues, the current member from Ottawa Centre, the current Minister of Labour, who, I believe in October 2012, introduced Bill 132 as a then private member. This is an individual who very passionately came forward with a bill that was very similar to the bill that we are debating today around the importance of making sure that we strike that balance within the system. I want to say to the current Minister of Labour and to those watching from his community and also from my community that I think the fact that our government has moved forward with this formal piece of legislation, Bill 83, is in fact a testament to the outstanding work and contribution that our Minister of Labour put into his own bill, Bill 132, back in, I believe, mid to late 2012. I just wanted to say that the Minister of Labour does deserve a great deal of credit for getting this particular item on the agenda and for moving it forward.

Many in this House will know that what Bill 83 seeks to do is to propose or to create a made-in-Ontario solution that would allow courts to quickly identify and deal with strategic lawsuits to prevent the unwarranted silencing of critics and minimize the time and resources spent by plaintiffs and defendants in the courts on meritless claims. I mentioned a second ago that, because our government takes the concerns that gave rise to this particular legislation very seriously, back in 2010, as many in this House and many others watching will know, we struck or convened an expert panel of individuals who we asked to come forward to study the issue of strategic litigation and to make recommendations as to what steps our government could take to address it.

I know that when the Attorney General stood in this House and spoke at first reading on this very important bill, he spoke very passionately and eloquently about the importance of making sure we found a way to strike a very, very important balance on this very important issue. He did point out in debate at first reading that with respect to the mandate that that panel was given back in 2010, our government asked the panel to determine, for example, a test for the courts to quickly recognize a strategic suit. We asked that panel to review appropriate

remedies for strategic suits. We asked the panel to look into appropriate limits to the protection of any proposed legislation, appropriate parties to benefit from those protections, and finally, methods to prevent any abuses in the future. I think it's important to note that we gave the individuals serving on this panel that very clear mandate.

Again, as many will know—people in this House on all sides who have watched this process unfold very closely over the last length of time will know that the individuals serving on the panel are themselves all held in very, very high regard in the legal profession and beyond. For example, the panel itself was chaired by Dr. Mayo Moran, dean of the University of Toronto law school, someone who is perceived to be and is, in fact, an expert in constitutional law and private law and civil wrongs. The membership of the panel also included one Peter Downard, partner at Fasken Martineau—this is an individual who has written extensively and has written authoritative legal texts on libel and defamation—and Brian MacLeod Rogers, who happens to serve as an adjunct professor at Ryerson University's School of Journalism.

I point out what the composition was of the particular panel, at least amongst those three individuals, because I think it's important to underscore that this is an issue that our government took very seriously. We wanted to bring to the table the kinds of experts that could provide us with the guidance and the advice and the input so that we could move forward with the exact kind of legislation that we have before us today—yet again, I should say, not unlike the legislation that the Minister of Labour, when he was not Minister of Labour, brought forward in his Bill 132, a bill that is very much in keeping, both in spirit and in content, with the bill that we are debating here today.

As I mentioned before, we asked the panel to take a look at some very specific examples of what was taking place in the system. They provided a report back to the government, and it is from that particular report that those experts brought their expertise to bear and we came forward with this particular legislation.

1520

It's important to note as well that the bill would allow a person being sued—in this case, the defendant in a lawsuit who believes that he or she is being sued for expression on a matter of public interest—we would provide them with the opportunity to have that lawsuit reviewed by a court within 60 days of filing a motion to dismiss the case. The court would review the defendant's motion in three phases, asking three specific questions:

(1) Is the lawsuit about expression on a matter of public interest? The defendant must show that his or her motion will be rejected, probably with costs.

(2) Are there grounds to believe that the proceeding has substantial merit and that the defendant does not have a valid defence?

(3) Is the harm likely to be suffered by the plaintiff by the defendant's expression so serious that the public interest in remedying that harm outweighs the public interest in continuing that expression?

Those are three very crucial questions I wanted to read into the record. I know that when the Attorney General spoke and also when his parliamentary assistant, the member from Scarborough Southwest, spoke at first reading, they both very eloquently and very passionately outlined why it's important to make sure that as we go forward with this legislation, as we continue to have the debate here in the House, we take into account those three particular questions.

Because I know that my time is drawing slowly but surely to a close, Speaker, I should also point out that in moving forward with Bill 83, Protection of Public Participation Act, we have to remember that this legislation contains many important provisions that support the goal that we should all have here of creating, maintaining and building a fair society. For example, we are creating faster, more efficient civil processes that provide greater clarity for the parties involved; we're addressing perceived and actual abusive lawsuits that can waste everyone's time and tie up valuable court resources; we're protecting freedom of expression and public participation, and I would say we are doing it in a balanced way, taking into account the views of the expert panel, taking into account the work done so earnestly by the member from Ottawa Centre with his private member's bill.

I sincerely hope that over the course of second reading debate, members on all sides will see fit to join with us on this side to proceed and move forward with this legislation to get it to committee for additional consideration.

I thank you, Speaker, for the time that I had this afternoon in the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure for me to provide a couple of minutes of questions and comments for the member for Vaughan—some would say that we share the same barber—

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Some would say.

Mr. Steve Clark:—some would say—and to provide a couple of minutes of comments on Bill 83. The formal name is An Act to amend the Courts of Justice Act, the Libel and Slander Act and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act in order to protect expression on matters of public interest.

The member talked about SLAPP legislation. I learned about this type of legislation when I had a municipal career. I remember, very vividly, running for office in my twenties and hearing about a court case that the city of Brockville was involved in over one of the particular road jobs—and it became embroiled in a lawsuit between the developer, the city; I think the consulting engineer was involved at the time. Ultimately, after I had been elected mayor, it had been settled, and a judgment came against the city for \$353,000. The developer asked that I bring the cheque to him. It was interesting, because at 22, I had barely seen cheques for \$350, let alone \$353,000. I remember going to the developer's office—his name was Jack Dodge—and he reminded me that it could have been

settled under a couple of mayors, before, for \$18,000. The mayor who preceded me could have settled it in his council for \$49,000, and here I was, giving a cheque for \$353,000. So I did some research and really became interested in these anti-SLAPP suits. Although they're not often levied, it's a fascinating situation.

I'm glad we're supporting this bill. I'm glad that the member brought up the panel. I just felt it was appropriate for me to give my own first-hand knowledge of my first foray into the legal city issues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'm sorry I wasn't here earlier for the speech the gentleman gave from across the way. However, in some of the comments I hope to be making a little bit later on this afternoon—the things that you find most concerning in this bill are actually things that are going to be changing through this.

We want to really highlight the cost of what it means to silence those voices. We need to make sure that those voices have the opportunity to speak up, in that when you don't put in the measures that are required to protect those voices, these are some of the concerns that might happen or that are very concerning to the general public.

We need to look, really, at ways that we're going to be embracing individuals as to how they can get involved, how they speak up and how they get to voice the concerns of not only their neighbours, street members and community members; in larger part, society is what we're talking about here.

We need to make sure that those are protected, and we need to make sure that there is a process to protect those voices. We need to make sure that if people take that step to voice their concerns and actually demonstrate that they have the will—and that's really key as well. When an individual stands up and has the will to talk on behalf of others and really bring something that's important and that is of great value to them, we need to have a process of protecting that so there is no repercussion that can happen to those individuals, so that they can actually endear others to present themselves and speak up.

We should be looking at embracing when people are coming up and being part of the process, which is called democracy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I listened very carefully to the very good speech from the member from Vaughan, and also the good comments made by the members from Leeds–Grenville and Algoma–Manitoulin. I'm looking forward to, hopefully, hearing from them when they get a chance to speak.

Basically, as was mentioned by the member from Vaughan, this bill allows people not to worry when they want to speak out against a developer or any other person or corporation and to not be afraid of getting hit with a lawsuit. The bill basically allows people to speak up and not to worry about a lawsuit when they believe they have a matter of public interest that they want to bring

forward, and they can have a lawsuit reviewed by the court if the lawsuit is brought within 60 days of filing a motion to dismiss the case.

As was mentioned earlier—I think the member from Leeds–Grenville mentioned this—a number of us have municipal backgrounds, and a number of municipal mayors brought this matter forward. They wanted this bill to pass, because what happens, obviously, is that sometimes a developer in a city or a town wants to build something, and if there are people in the community that oppose it, those people could be sued by the developer, which is kind of a way to scare people into not speaking out against development.

This bill will present a test so that it's not that easy to suddenly go forward and sue somebody. This test is well done and well spoken about here.

I'm looking forward to hearing from other members here, to hear what their points of view are on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm happy to rise to speak to the comments made by the member from Vaughan.

I think that in this society, we expect fair treatment, and this is part of that. Democracy requires that people speak out against injustices without worrying about the court system coming back and penalizing them.

1530

So of course our party is in support of this. We think that it's a good idea that these protections are put in place. We've heard from the member for Leeds–Grenville about a case in his riding where the court system can be used against people. We want to make sure that doesn't happen. We want to make sure that people are treated fairly. It encourages people to speak out.

We heard the message from the member from Algoma–Manitoulin, talking about the protection of voices in his riding, as well as Scarborough Southwest.

One thing that we're not hearing from this government is, we're not hearing a jobs plan. I think everybody agrees with this plan. We were part of an agreement that would move a lot of this legislation off the plate so that we could actually tackle some of the issues.

We have a long-term energy plan today. I wish they would have given this a vote—whether we could have actually gone back and re-voted on the Green Energy Act, because people in my riding are being really inundated with the cost of this, and we see businesses leaving. To them, that's an injustice that needs to be addressed.

The cost of doing business: We looked at Heinz just a couple of weeks ago, and Caterpillar and Xstrata. People are leaving, and the message is always the same: They can't afford the price of doing business in Ontario.

Sooner or later, if we don't act, we're going to have more people requiring services than we have people who pay the taxes for them. Of course, then it's a mushrooming effect where it just spirals down to the bottom. We're getting dug deeper and deeper into a hole that—people in my riding are starting to question whether, even if things go well, we will ever be able to dig ourselves out.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I rise today as the Progressive Conservative critic for the Ministry of the Attorney General and the elected representative for York–Simcoe to speak to Bill 83, the Protection of Public Participation Act. This bill was crafted to prevent and appropriately dispose of SLAPPs, strategic lawsuits against public participation.

Before I begin my own comments, I would just like to thank my caucus colleague the member for Dufferin–Caledon for her one-hour lead-off speech on this bill. She outlined many aspects that we as a caucus favour in this bill. Most useful were her three examples of SLAPPs, which she delved into to show the different facets of the problem this bill seeks to remedy. As the member from Dufferin–Caledon said, we will be supporting this bill on second reading, and certainly my comments reflect the same decision.

This is a reasonable and effective bill and, what is most important, I would argue: fair. The one caveat, and I think others have mentioned it, is that it has nothing to do with our economy—not that this type of bill should, but Ontarians do urgently need legislation that begins to focus on jobs and the economy. We find ourselves in the position here of looking at something that is important but doesn't look to the dire circumstances we find ourselves in in this province, but I digress.

Ontarians have been waiting for this legislation. For more than five years, this issue of strategic lawsuits against public participation has been present as a hindrance in our legal system. It has marred our public process for considering land redevelopments across our province at the municipal level. It has marred our election process and it has marred public relationships between the media as well as with public servants. SLAPPs are an obstacle to justice for both sides of a proceeding or dispute. They are a legal problem that has yet to be addressed by legislation in Ontario.

First of all, what are SLAPPs? Strategic lawsuits or litigation against public participation are primarily lawsuits filed in court by one party or individual as a tactic for silencing or intimidating the other party. They usually take the form of libel, slander or defamation allegations and are almost always accompanied by an unrealistic and unreasonable request for financial damages to be awarded against the defendant. It is important to remember that SLAPPs do not pertain to any dispute but rather must be about matters of public interest, such as the fundamental rights and freedoms of a citizen, corporation or other organization. I think it's important to underline that it is not about a dispute; it is a matter of public interest. I'll have more to say about that in further remarks.

The point of a SLAPP is to remove opposition, to frighten or bully the naysayers away. The effect, in other words, is a slander chill that silences. The targets of these lawsuits are often not even able to properly defend themselves due to the cost of legal representation, particularly paying for representation in a suit that may last

months or years, as is common. But the real intent of a SLAPP is not to go to court. It is to scare and discredit an opponent into submission or silence. SLAPPs aim to remove opposition by removing their freedom of expression and tarnishing their reputation. This is why we support the bill.

The fundamental freedom of a citizen to be able to speak out on a matter of public interest is paramount. Freedom of speech is vital. The fundamental right of a citizen to protect his reputation is also basic. A citizen's right to due process and to be treated equally by the legal system is a primary feature of our civil society. Public participation in public discussions is a cornerstone of a healthy, well-functioning democracy. A fair justice system must balance our citizens' freedom of expression with the protection of reputation and economic interests. Again, a cornerstone of being able to introduce legislation such as this is that it must balance, on one hand, the citizen's freedom and, at the same time, protection of reputation and economic interest. This is why Ontario's legal system must address this issue, and Bill 83 does so appropriately.

The components of the bill require amendments to three existing laws: the Courts of Justice Act, the Libel and Slander Act and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act.

The amendments to the Courts of Justice Act deal with the proposed fast-track review process for lawsuits alleged to be brought for strategic reasons rather than to remedy legitimate complaints. As anyone can understand, if there is an allegation of libel or slander in the context of an ongoing dispute, that allegation needs to be verified before proceedings continue. Under this bill, once a statement of claim is filed with the court, the defendant could immediately file a motion asking the court to dismiss the action as a strategic lawsuit, and the motion would have to be heard within 60 days. If such a motion is brought to court, it would immediately put a stop to the other relevant proceedings, as no further steps would be allowed to occur until the motion was decided.

In order to assess the motion to dismiss the alleged strategic lawsuit, the judge would apply a three-part test within those 60 days. This test, as the Attorney General said in his speech, is geared to balance a citizen's freedom of expression with the protection of reputation and economic interest. Before the three-part test is applied to the plaintiff's action, it will be up to the defendant—the person who is being sued—to prove to the judge that the subject matter is about the public good and not simply a private matter between two isolated parties.

Just to stop at this point to recognize two important things: One is the timing, the notion that this can't drag on; the fact that a decision has to be made within 60 days is very important to maintaining the justice intended by this piece of legislation. We all know that justice delayed is justice denied, and it is as much in this context as in any other legal context.

1540

The other key objective here is that the dispute is about the public good, and certainly there are variables in

terms of how that's defined, and it is up to the judge to make that decision—again, a very important protection to balance the interests.

If the defendant does prove this, then the judge shall summarily dismiss the action if the plaintiff cannot satisfy the three-part test. The onus is on the plaintiff to show (1) that the proceeding has substantial merit; (2) the lack of a valid defence on the part of the defendant; and (3) that the harm is sufficiently serious to outweigh the public interest in protecting the expression.

The few critics of this bill point to this three-part test as being too onerous on the plaintiff. They charge that the plaintiff is put at a disadvantage because this test is applied without the benefit of normal court procedure: without full documentary production, examinations for discovery or oral evidence. Critics say it will be nearly impossible for a judge to decide on a summary basis whether a claim has substantial merit, whether the defendant lacks a valid defence and, finally, what the public interest is in any given dispute. These critics go so far as to state that this bill will give the defendant the ability to bully the plaintiff. In this light, they portray this bill as a draconian measure, saying it restricts access to the courts.

It may be true that the test is onerous on a plaintiff. Also, the three-part test may be onerous for a judge to apply. But is it overly burdensome? After careful consideration of the bill and both sides of this argument, I feel that it does restrict access to the courts, but in a justifiable manner. One must acknowledge that just because a court action can be filed, the action itself may be without merit and may be an example of abuse of process. Abuse of process and frivolous lawsuits are detrimental to the delivery of justice on a grand scale and must be guarded against. Time is a valuable resource, particularly in our court system, and time is money, particularly when it comes to the lawyers and the court system.

Bill 83 gives a mechanism to weed out some of the frivolous claims that confront our legal system. This is the second important reason that our caucus supports this bill. It will free up valuable public resources in our court system and will allow our judges to focus their time and attention on more serious matters. Scarce taxpayers' dollars are grossly misused hearing frivolous cases that needlessly bog down our justice system.

Unjustifiable claims have no business in the system. Their presence is not only an injustice to the innocent but also to Ontarians at large. Abuse of process cannot be allowed to sideline justice, whether it is an endless cyclical appeal process or a strategic lawsuit against public participation.

Another amendment to the Courts of Justice Act that supports the rights of an accused is the proposal to award costs to a successful defendant named in a motion deemed as a strategic action. If a plaintiff brought an action to the court that was deemed as a SLAPP, the defendant would have his or her court costs paid by the plaintiff. Further, if the judge feels the SLAPP was

malicious in nature, the judge would be free to award costs for damages to the successful defendant. On the surface, this may seem drastic, but remember, this is an action deemed to be frivolous, with the intent of silencing a person's freedom of expression. I think we can all understand this provision.

Bill 83's proposed amendments to the Libel and Slander Act are an improvement as well. A practical example of the need for reform would be the current law of qualified privilege, when two or more people, even a small meeting group, are having a conversation about a subject of shared concern. The current law considers such a conversation as privileged. Neither party could be sued by another because they share a direct interest in the matter discussed. These conversations are protected by the Libel and Slander Act of Ontario so long as these conversations are without malice. However, when a third party, such as the press, or a tweeter in the social media universe, reports on these conversations, that same conversation by two or more citizens is not protected by law.

As you can imagine, this has a chilling effect as well. People who want to speak their minds in a public forum would be intimidated by this loophole in the current law. To prevent this type of SLAPP, Bill 83 proposes to extend the current law to include privilege for public conversations, even after they have been reported by the media or otherwise.

Vibrant public discourse depends on removing the fear of being sued. This bill does that. Of course, if there is malicious intent, this new law would not protect the defendant from litigation, which is, I think we would all agree, reasonable and fair to both sides.

The third act that this bill amends is the Statutory Powers Procedure Act. In line with the intent to save both the time and money of the courts as well as the time of the plaintiff and defendant, Bill 83 proposes changes on how costs are requested and awarded.

Under the current act, hearings are held to determine if one party should pay the other party's legal costs after the case has been decided. These hearings can be very lengthy and costly in themselves. The changes proposed in this bill would allow parties to make their arguments about how costs should be awarded in written submissions to the administrative tribunal or court as part of the primary proceeding. This should result in faster decisions. This is an area of the bill I would like to delve into further when this bill makes it to committee.

I was pleased to hear from the Attorney General that he welcomes amendments in committee to make this bill stronger. I look forward to taking him up on that offer.

This bill is the result of a 2010 expert panel that was tasked with studying the issue of strategic litigation with an eye to crafting appropriate legislation for the province. The report of the Anti-SLAPP Advisory Panel is very thorough, and it has provided the skeleton on which this legislation hangs.

Upon consulting with stakeholders, they have told us nearly unanimously that they support the bill. The On-

tario Bar Association supports this bill and stated that, "Public confidence depends on the ability of our justice system to operate efficiently and to enhance democratic principles. Both of these goals are threatened by the bad-faith litigation that this new legislation is designed to curb."

Cities across this province have been requesting this legislation for at least five years. Many other provinces, and most American states, have similar anti-SLAPP legislation in place. With this bill, hopefully Ontario will make up for being late off the mark.

With an eye to streamlining process and recognition of justified urgency, this bill protects freedom of speech, reputation and the economic interests of parties involved. As I stated earlier, the PC caucus will be supporting this bill on second reading.

1550

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm happy to stand here today on behalf of the constituents of London-Fanshawe and add my comments to this debate with regard to Bill 83, the protection of public participation.

I think everyone can agree, and we've heard consensus that the Conservatives are also looking at supporting this bill, because I think we can all agree that everyone deserves a voice, especially when they have an issue in their community come forward and they want to participate and speak freely about an issue without having the threat of a lawsuit hanging over their head, because we know that lawsuits are very expensive. Justice should not just be for those who can pay for a court case to defend what they'd like to say in a forum where they can speak freely.

It is interesting. I did want to point out a couple of things because I'm not sure if the public at home may have the clear understanding of what a defendant is. A defendant is any person who is accused. So the defendant is charged with committing some kind of an offence. The plaintiff is the party that's known as the complainant or the claimant: the party who is suing that person.

Most of the time, the defendant, the one who is being charged perhaps with saying something that might damage the reputation of an organization or corporation that's doing something in their community that they don't agree with, they're the ones—the defendant is being charged by the plaintiff. Therefore, the defendant has to justify in court that what they're saying is actually for the public good and is going to be a detriment if that corporation perhaps does something—environmentally we'll use, because many times that is one example that's put forward. So it is good to see that "SLAPP" legislation is being presented in the House and that we have a debate on this today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise in support of Bill 83. I listened attentively to my colleague from Vaughan, who started up the debate this afternoon, and to hear my

colleague opposite from York-Simcoe about this whole bill.

It's three years now that we've brought this bill, this made-in-Ontario bill, in support of freedom of expression, because oftentimes certain individuals are afraid to go to court because of a fear of expressing themselves, but more importantly, in the proposed legislation, if passed, "to discourage the use of litigation as a means of unduly limiting expression on matters of public interest." I believe that many of us in our communities have constituents who are fearful of speaking out because of this limitation.

By having a proposed legislation, this will encourage the expression of matters of public interest, but more importantly, encourage public debate on issues that are matters of public interest. More importantly, this proposed legislation, if passed, would also reduce the risk that participation by the public in debate of matters of public interest will be hampered in terms of legal action, because I heard many times in my riding of Scarborough-Agincourt that residents are fearful to speak out because of fear of legal litigation. This is not what we want to do in terms of encouraging public engagement and public expression of matters that are of public interest.

More importantly, this proposed legislation also has heard from the panel—I think the member from York Simcoe spoke eloquently about the panel and the work of the panel before us. I encourage everyone to participate in this debate, but more importantly, move this debate down the road for more consultation to the committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's always a pleasure to follow my colleague from York-Simcoe: not only a former teacher but a lifelong student. I'm always impressed that she has done her homework. She gave a very extensive overview of the bill and what she believes this bill will bring, and she always impresses me that she comes to Queen's Park every day with that commitment on behalf of her stakeholders and constituents in York-Simcoe.

Speaker, I really wish we were talking about a jobs plan. The Liberal government seems bereft of a jobs plan. There are a million people in this great province who are out of work and continue to be out of work, without a whole lot of hope that this government is doing anything to change that.

They called for a motion earlier to take the legislation we were debating off the table; I was really hoping they were going to make that the absolute, critical part. At the very minimum, I would have liked to have seen that they were talking about the long-term energy plan, because to me, what they've brought out so far is just a bunch of window dressing as they gear up towards the next election—and unfortunately, that's not the case.

I will come back to Bill 83. I believe it is a good piece of legislation. It brings fairness to the legislation. It removes the bullying aspect. I fully believe that people should not fear the right to express their opinion, particularly in matters of public interest.

It limits unrealistic and unreasonable requests. I think there are way too many of those. I think there are frivolous cases out there where people bring it up and which, again, in many cases—in my riding, there are a number of those types of issues that are limiting employment. They're limiting the jobs ability on things like approvals for quarries in my riding that, again, have met all the requirements. One gentleman right now has been waiting about six years for his quarry approval—very impactful to the people who could be working in that quarry. He's starting to have major concerns about what he's going to do, going down the road.

Speaker, these types of frivolous things bog down our courts. People are being held back, and then those who truly need to get through the court system are not able to. So this builds in some time frame, at least, to have some action, which is nice to see from this government.

At the end of the day, our PC critic from Dufferin-Caledon has suggested, and I agree with her, that we will be supporting this bill when it gets to committee and we'll do some further amendment—and we thank you for that, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'm glad to say that I was here for the entire speech that the member from York-Simcoe gave. I was sitting here, listening to her very intently, and I enjoyed what she started talking about, which is that this government needs to really look at where their priorities are, and she requested that they come out with a jobs plan. When you think about it, that's what we need to focus on—what are the real priorities of Ontarians right now—and unfortunately, we're not doing that. But we're talking about Bill 83, and that is an important issue that we need to have debate about—and I'm getting to that, Mr. Speaker.

I wanted to remind her that my leader, Andrea Horwath, actually tried to bring this piece of legislation a couple of times in the past, and it fell to the wayside, or it wasn't deemed as a priority, and that's really unfortunate, because we wouldn't have to be dealing with this right now.

She did highlight the effectiveness of SLAPPs and exactly what they do: It silences the voices, and it really hurts individuals' freedom to speak.

We really need to make sure, once again, that we embrace those opportunities and encourage people to participate in our processes, to make sure that their voices are heard and that they are truly participating in our democracy.

She also talked about the amount of money that is being wasted in frivolous lawsuits that are being imposed. Those individuals who are putting those lawsuits forward have no intention of following through on them. Their whole intention, their whole purpose for having the SLAPP on, is to silence the individuals who are coming forward and speaking on behalf of neighbours and community members, and that in itself is very effective.

Hopefully, this law will pass this time—from what I hear in the House—and we can get this through effectively so we can focus on the other priorities that we need to do on behalf of our constituents.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I now return to the member for York–Simcoe for her reply.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I appreciate the comments made by the members for London–Fanshawe, Scarborough–Agincourt, Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and Algoma–Manitoulin. I think there were some general themes there, certainly one of them being the fact that there's an element of frustration on this side of the House that there are other issues: a jobs plan and the unemployment, and the kind of dire economic state we find ourselves in. However, because Bill 83 is in front of us, we have all given it our attention.

1600

It seems to me that if I look at the comments and listen to the comments that were made, it's a question of the fundamental principle of justice; that is, deciding on a balance between the arguments on both sides. In this case, I think there has been a very clear plan in place in this legislation to provide an opportunity for that freedom of speech that we all recognize is paramount, at the same time distinguishing between that and what might be frivolous, and the question of balancing what is actually the public need, not issue a challenge on one's reputation or the question of economic interest.

I think this bill, as the other speakers also suggest, is a good attempt at balancing that power—competing issues. I think the 60 days is also going to provide an opportunity for these things to move along in an expeditious way. Certainly that would be consistent with the comments made by others in today's debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege and an honour to be able to add my 20 minutes to this debate. I'd like to preface some of my remarks—with your latitude of course, Mr. Speaker—and talk, first of all, about SLAPP suits, but to talk about what engenders those SLAPP suits. Mostly, we see that they're coming out of people's reactions to developments. And we know that many, many people in this province dread and fear development applications in their neighbourhoods, because if they oppose them and if those development applications head off to the Ontario Municipal Board, they know it's going to cause them a great deal of grief.

When people ask me about my own riding of Beaches–East York, and ask what the major problems or the major issues are in Beaches–East York, it's very simple. If you live in the north half of the riding and you're in the East York portion, our schools are underdeveloped. Kids are in multi-portable units—40 portables in a schoolyard—and there's no building. Some of them are raccoon-infested and have all the problems of leaking portables.

But if you're in the south half of the riding, the major issue is, and continues to be, development along Queen Street—the Ontario Municipal Board and the developers coming there, running roughshod over ordinary citizens, and those ordinary citizens find themselves throughout at a considerable disadvantage when dealing with developers, and sometimes when dealing with city hall. They are constantly being threatened or reminded that if they don't do things correctly, they could find themselves with a SLAPP suit, they could find themselves before the courts; they could find themselves out of a lot of money. And, Mr. Speaker—or I should say Madam Speaker; I see we've just changed now—they find themselves at a huge disadvantage.

I watched these citizen groups. I watch before they contemplate taking a matter before the Ontario Municipal Board. Even when city council would vote in their favour, they have to do a number of things. First of all, they have to start raising funds. You see these great big developers out there with high-priced lawyers, planners and engineers and all the things at their disposal—they're in it for the money game. They don't mind spending half a million dollars or a million dollars in order to go to the board, and they don't mind putting in the odd little dig and pressure, telling the citizens that they either have to play ball or they'll find themselves out a lot of money and possibly with a SLAPP suit.

So I watch these citizens. I watch what they have to do. I have been to bake sales. The neighbours all get together and bake pies and muffins and sell them. I've been to church groups. I went to a very excellent concert at St. Aidan's a few months ago that was put on by a couple of local musicians. The musicians gave their time free, and the church was filled with people who paid \$20 to come and watch the musicians play in order that that money would go to the local neighbours so that they would have money to put on a professional appeal against what the developers were trying to do on Queen Street, and by doing that professional appeal would not find themselves likely lumbered with a SLAPP suit.

I've seen what the community groups have to do. They have to go out and beg and borrow to get one of their own members in the community who might have a law degree or practise law—although not necessarily in this particular field—to give freely of their time. I have seen them raise small amounts of money to try to hire a planner who would argue, either in support of the city or against the city, in order to try to preserve their neighbourhood. I have seen the developers running totally roughshod by saying unkind things, oftentimes those which border on threats. "If you don't like this, we're going to go to the OMB," they say, "and then we're going to see how much that's going to cost."

I've also seen—and this is becoming very prevalent in Toronto—that those same developers don't even give the community or the city a chance to make a decision on a development application, because this government in its wisdom a number of years ago, when doing changes to the Ontario Municipal Board, set timelines that are im-

possible for communities to meet. There is a 30-day timeline for a committee of adjustment application to render a decision.

You can understand, with hundreds, possibly thousands, of committee of adjustment applications in a city like Toronto, going every month, that it's very often impossible for the city and its committees of adjustment—whether it be Toronto, Mississauga, Hamilton, Windsor, Ottawa or any large place—to actually accommodate the number of applications, and as soon as that 30-day timeline is gone, the developers are in there and go straight to the Ontario Municipal Board, which suddenly gets very expensive and very difficult for a great many citizens.

You also see the same thing even on major planning applications, where you have zoning bylaw changes or where you have official plan changes. They too are limited to 120 days, and it's virtually impossible for a city like Toronto or Mississauga in many cases on a large development to get all of the documentation they need, to have community consultations, to get their own experts and expertise on paper and finished within 120 days.

On the 121st day, you can be absolutely convinced that the developer is there and off to the OMB, and then that puts all of the community groups who were opposed and the city, who may or may not have opposed, on the defensive. They have to go, then, and file their necessary documents. They have to go and be subject, possibly, to SLAPP suits if they're not ready.

This is a very difficult problem that has gone on for too long. Ontario is the only province in Canada that has an Ontario Municipal Board, and we're the only one that puts citizens at risk—with lawyers and developers, with all of the money at their disposal and the threats they have around SLAPP suits—right into the mix. I think we have to, as a province, start treating our citizens more fairly.

I support this bill, Madam Speaker—about to be Mr. Speaker again. We'll wait for the Speakers to change.

I support this bill, Mr. Speaker, and I know my colleagues in the NDP support this bill, because we have to bring some kind of fairness back into the entire process. This is one small part.

If you start looking at what's happened here, as was already said by my colleague in his two-minute hit, the leader of the NDP, Andrea Horwath, two times in the past, has brought forward a motion similar to this bill, trying to do away with anti-SLAPP suits. The government of the day—and this Liberal government, ignored it, I think, because they thought it either wasn't important or wasn't their idea. I'm not sure which one it was; it was probably the latter, because now they know it's important, and now that it's their idea and their bill they seem all gung-ho to go forward.

But we in the New Democratic Party know that this is an important tool for ordinary citizens. No one in this province should be afraid of standing up for their rights. No one in this province should ever be afraid of saying what is the right thing, or for telling somebody when they

believe the other side is wrong or that they are imposing a new regime or new idea upon their community or neighbourhood which is going to be detrimental.

The province, in 2010, hired a man from the University of Toronto—I think it's a man—Mayo Moran, to make recommendations. The recommendations that were made and were guided were good recommendations. In fact, the legislation that we have before us has been guided by that which is already in existence in the province of Quebec and an overwhelming number of US states. We all recognize, in North America, the power of the lawyers and the courts and the litigious country, the litigious nature of our society: that anyone, at literally any time, can threaten to take someone to court, and they very often do. They do so not necessarily because they have a grievance that they think will be resolved by the court or because they think that the courts will side with them in the end or that some grievous harm has happened to them, but they do so because they know it puts a chill down the spine of anyone who is suddenly slapped with a suit.

1610

I would ask my colleagues here if you've ever been sued by someone for something that you knew was frivolous, that he or she knew was frivolous when they were suing you, and all you can do is say, "I will defend myself," get your wallet out, and start spending a lot of money. This is what we're trying to stop and this is what I'm hoping this bill will stop.

Ordinary citizens are afraid to speak up and stand up. If you go back even to the time of the Athenians, Pericles talked about the duty of ordinary citizens to stand up and speak and be counted. That is the whole nature, supposedly, of a democratic society, and it fails when someone with a lot of money, someone with a lot of power, puts the fear that ordinary citizens no longer have a voice.

Although I support this legislation and I will be very happy to support it at second reading and send it to committee, I'm hoping in committee we can toughen this up. It does not reverse the onus. What this does is it allows the developer huge latitude. When they take their lawyers and take an ordinary citizen to court, the onus is not upon the developer to prove at the outset that they are being harmed or that there is something to the suit. They simply have to state that they are seeking SLAPP action. We need to have the onus reversed. The first stage should always be that the developer has to prove, before they go any further in the process, that they have been harmed or that irreparable harm has happened to them as a result of what a citizen had to say.

The second thing this legislation does not have is that you do not have to prove that it's not being brought for some frivolous reason, and I think that needs to be changed.

The last thing: It does not specify the timelines for filing affidavits of defence or by the plaintiff, and it's very important that these things not stretch out for long periods of time, because the longer they stretch out, the

more expensive they tend to be. Certainly, especially in the case of the plaintiff, the person who is alleging that wrongdoing was done to them, they need to do it in a timely manner so that everybody knows the case that's in front of them and they do not stretch it out for years and years and file affidavits down the road on and on and on, to extend a case that could normally be dismissed within a little while into years.

I'm reminded, Mr. Speaker, about some of the SLAPPs that I have witnessed over the last number of years in my political life both as a mayor and a councillor and as an MPP. I am reminded of what happened to the good citizens of Leaside when I was the mayor and they took a very large developer to court over some of the land that was being developed. They found themselves at a huge disadvantage as the case wound its way through the OMB, only to lose it in the end and then to be threatened with a SLAPP suit, which would have clearly bankrupted them. They were able to get out of that with some negotiations with the developer, with the courts and with everyone else, but I still remember how it took probably the mightiest ratepayers' group in all of Toronto to task and humbled them ever so quickly.

I am reminded of my own friend who went to the Ontario Municipal Board and was threatened with SLAPP suits in Fort Erie, where he was living at the time, because he didn't like what the council in Fort Erie was doing. He phoned me up in a panic one day because he had been threatened with a SLAPP suit, and I had to advise him not to succumb to it, to go and argue that he was being a citizen, that he didn't have the money for lawyers and planners, when the OMB had asked, "Where's your lawyer and where's your planner?" He was simply there because he objected to the development. In the end, the OMB let him off, but not without a really good scare, and he's not a person who scares easily. But there it was; that was part of his.

I'm looking at the good folks on Clonmore. I see my colleague here from Scarborough Southwest. He will know that issue very well. It's just across the border from my riding; it's actually in his. I see the good folks on Clonmore who tried to go back to the Ontario Municipal Board, tried to reverse a decision that was made by city council some 20 or 30 or 40 years ago, when the Scarborough expressway was going to be built, and then, when it wasn't built, the land was sold and the developers went in and they were talking about 10 or 15 or 20 50-storey buildings.

Well, you can imagine, the neighbours on the south side of Gerrard and Clonmore were a little bit upset when this was revisited. They wanted to go back to the city and to the Ontario Municipal Board in order to see whether a decision made 40 or 50 years ago—or 30 or 40 years ago, I guess—was still valid. Some of them were threatened by the developer that they were going to be charged with legal costs and everything else, because they had a decision which they had never acted on in all that period of time and which they held sacrosanct. I remember them coming and asking me some questions, and I'm sure my

colleague from Scarborough Southwest as well. In the end, I think, they had to succumb, because they were too afraid of the costs.

But I think the granddaddy of them all—and I spoke about this in the Legislature a number of years back—was the people from Geranium Corp. versus the Innisfil District Association. I know my colleague who just spoke immediately before me is very familiar with this. This was the Geranium Corp. versus the Innisfil District Association. Geranium was the developer behind the proposed Big Bay Point mega-marina and resort on Lake Simcoe.

In responding to multiple lawsuits and an unprecedented claim of \$3.2 million in OMB costs against the Innisfil District Association and its lawyers, one defendant swore in an affidavit to the OMB—and I want to read what this defendant said, because I think this is what comes to the crux of the problem. This is one sworn affidavit on one SLAPP suit, but I think it captures it all brilliantly.

The defendant stated in the affidavit, under oath:

"I feel threatened, harassed, and intimidated by Geranium's legal claims, and fear exposure to lawsuits and the costs associated with defending them.

"I do not write letters to the town, county, province or local papers in fear of repercussions from the Big Bay Point developers, Kimvar Enterprises Inc., and Mr. Earl Rumm. From fear of being implicated in a lawsuit myself, I would not write a letter or voice my personal opinions about the project in any way whatsoever.

"I do not have the funds or means to defend myself in a lawsuit, which increases my fear of publicly speaking out as an individual. I would not testify at an OMB hearing with the lawsuits pending and the threat of new legal actions. I would not be able to defend myself financially from such a wealthy developer."

Mr. Speaker, this is the problem that ordinary citizens find themselves in. This is why this bill needs to pass second reading and go to committee. Is the bill perfect? I've already said three areas where I think it could and must be improved, but it needs to be done fairly rapidly.

If I can only speak on behalf of the citizens of Beaches–East York, there are a number of cases pending before the Ontario Municipal Board as I speak, some that have already started the proceedings, some that will start over the next few weeks. In every single case, it is David against Goliath. In every single case, it's developers with huge pockets against citizens who have only the love of their community and neighbourhood in their hearts. That's all they have. They have bake sales. They have concerts. They have fundraising in the park. I don't know how many things I've gone to. This is all that they have, and they cannot, in the end, be threatened with having SLAPPs brought against them. They cannot think that they're going to lose their home or their livelihood or any other number of things that are often stated indirectly to them.

I think as a matter of living in a democratic country, as a matter of having people feel that they have the right to voice their opinion and to have that opinion heard in an

unbiased way, we need to protect each and every one of those individuals.

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So I'm asking all of the members of the House to debate this as strongly as you feel is necessary, but I am also asking at some point that this not drag on too long. There are many, many potential lawsuits out there, and every day that we let this pass, every day that we argue it and don't send it to committee, every day that it takes too long to actually become law, there are more and more individuals entrapped by the process. We do not have a fair process before the Ontario Municipal Board. If I was the minister, I would make a hundred changes tomorrow on that body, probably even abolishing it. In the meantime, please protect the citizens of this province who have no other recourse except to go there. You will be doing them a favour while we sort out the whole mess that is known as the OMB.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'm glad to join the discussion today on Bill 83. I wanted to commend the member from East York for his comments on this bill—and that's true: Those of us who have had a life at the municipal level all saw these big developers suing the poor neighbour because they were objecting to a development and they were objecting to them destroying their quality of life. So I'm very much in support of this bill, and like the member who just spoke, I'd like this to go to committee as soon as possible and, if it's possible, come back before Christmas so that we can vote on this bill and protect those who are objecting to what they believe is an infringement on their quality of life.

The court has to answer questions before saying yes or no, but what is also very important is that while a motion is pending, no steps may be taken in a lawsuit. That's very important. It stops the process and helps one of the two parties to make sense of what's going on.

So let's move this as quickly as we can and resolve a problem that has been pending for too long.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to commend the member for Beaches–East York. As a former municipal politician, he certainly has kicked off his 20-minute rotation, talking about an issue that—anyone who has ever been involved in municipal politics knows that issues around development are ones that we all remember, long after we have had the chain of office, in your case, around your neck. It was great to hear some of the issues in his riding, in the north and in the south. I'm not very familiar with his riding, so it was nice to hear that local example. I'm also glad that he brought up the Big Bay Point development, which is something that I think many of us were aware of. Really, when you speak about Bill 83, you have to also acknowledge that particular case, because many of the things that happened on that case are why we're here today.

I want to take the opportunity, because I didn't have a chance in the member for York–Simcoe's speech, to

congratulate both her and the member for Dufferin–Caledon—our present critic and our previous critic—for their words on this bill. As they both put on the public record, we are supporting this piece of legislation. I'm glad to hear that the member for York–Simcoe has some ideas for some amendments because I think it's important, as the Attorney General said in his one-hour leadoff, that the government is open to amendments.

We had Bill 122 collapse because the government House leader moved a motion to close the debate. I know that in a few moments the member for Durham is going to get to speak. He really wanted to speak on Bill 122, given his education background as a former trustee. I know he's going to have the enthusiasm that he always brings to this place, when he speaks on Bill 83. I want to congratulate him, but I also want to acknowledge the member for Beaches–East York for a wonderful address.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's always a pleasure to comment on the very experienced member from Beaches–East York.

As he mentioned, actually, in his previous comments, this legislation has already been introduced by our leader, Andrea Horwath, in the past. The anti-SLAPP legislation—she has actually introduced it twice. So, obviously, we are going to be supportive of this piece of legislation.

We do share some of the frustration that has been expressed by members of the government that it has taken so long. But we in turn could say to you, "Well, what took you so long as well?"

That said, the member from Beaches–East York has pointed out that, once again, while this legislation is reflective of the panel's recommendations, there are still ways to make this legislation stronger, which always begs the question: Why not address these key issues in the legislation as you bring it forward? But we will be looking at three key areas that are not addressed in Bill 83.

This piece of legislation does not reverse the onus of proof. The party initiating the suit does not have to prove that the suit is not being brought to silence public participation. It does not specify timelines for filing a responding affidavit by the plaintiff or mention anything about the defendant filing additional affidavits, as per panel recommendation in 2010. These are two issues, for instance, that could have been addressed as the Attorney General has brought forward this piece of legislation. We, of course, as usual, will be looking to make these changes at committee, as is our responsibility to do so. The member for Beaches–East York has accurately outlined that.

I look forward to the rest of the debate today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I listened to the entire speech from the member for Beaches–East York. I think, as usual, when he speaks, I learn something. He has had a long history as mayor of East York—the last mayor of east York. I had an opportunity to sit on city council with him as well.

I think he brought into the discussion the very essence of the purpose of this bill, which is to help ratepayers to be able to move forward—well, not just ratepayers but other people in the community to move forward against those who may have more money, in cases where they feel that the matter is of public interest, and speak out against it.

I think he summed up, basically, what we all want to do around this Legislative Assembly today, and that's to get this bill moving. I think this kind of debate is good; it's healthy. I think that once it gets to committee, it will even be better at that point. I'll be representing the Attorney General, as his parliamentary assistant, when it gets there, and I look forward to the discussions that will come forward at that time.

There are some really good points that were brought out by the member for Beaches–East York. Other members here have spoken very well, with some interesting possible changes to the bill. I don't know which ones will go through. All three parties will have a chance at the committee to speak to this bill.

There's some concern that it took a long time to get here. I think we've had some long discussions on some other bills. There are a lot of items before the Legislature right now. I understand the point that was brought up earlier, that there probably were more speakers on Bill 122, I believe it was. The problem is, we only have so much time to get all this legislation through.

But getting back to the member for Beaches–East York, I hope he'll come to committee and bring his thoughts forward. They're excellent thoughts. I look forward to this bill going to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. We go back to the member for Beaches–East York for his reply.

Mr. Michael Prue: I would first of all like to thank the Minister of Community Safety and the members from Leeds–Grenville, Kitchener–Waterloo and Scarborough Southwest for their comments. I really appreciate the comments, because it was clear to me, in listening, that it was nobody talking about something other than what I had actually spoken about. Oftentimes, people use the two-minute hit to, you know, put the party platform forward or something else. But I want to thank you very genuinely for actually having listened to what I said and commenting on it.

1630

For the Minister of Community Safety, I know we have tangled in the past over how rapidly things should be debated in this House and when they should be sent to committee, but it seems to me that I am in some agreement with her, the member from Kitchener–Waterloo and the member from Scarborough Southwest that this should go to committee fairly rapidly. I don't know what my colleagues in the Conservatives, in the official opposition, will want to say on the bill, and I welcome any new thought process at all, but it seems to me quite clear at this juncture that they, too, want it to go there.

The member from Leeds–Grenville, bringing up the issue again and commenting about the Big Bay Point

development—this still sticks in my craw, even though it was not in my neighbourhood. To see the people of Innisfil—to see the people fighting against one of the largest development projects ever to be imposed upon them by an outside developer, right in their neighbourhood, and the profound impact that may or may not have had on Lake Simcoe and the cottages and the recreational use of that property, and then to see the SLAPP suit, was very disheartening.

Last but not least, to the member from Scarborough Southwest, thank you for your comments on sending it to committee. We've been colleagues for a long time. I genuinely appreciate your listening to what I had to say today.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. Mario Sergio: I have to say, what a refreshing, good afternoon, Speaker, first with a good rendition and an in-depth account by the member from York–Simcoe, and then from the very much experienced—I would say the voice of experience from Beaches–East York. You could see, Speaker, that as a former mayor from the former city of East York, he brings a lot of experience on planning and local issues.

I have to say, really, that at the end of his speech, the member said, "Don't wait any longer. Move this bill forward. It's long overdue." We should have had this bill some 30, 40 years ago. Indeed, we would have saved a lot of aggravation for a lot of people. But it's finally here, and I totally agree with the member from Beaches–East York to get on with it as quickly as possible.

I know we are doing second reading. I know that this is going to travel to committee. I heard some of the other members saying that we could make some changes and improvements and make it better, and I said so be it, but let's not take six months to debate it. Let's make whatever changes we feel will make the bill better, and then let's bring it to the House for approval. I think the public expects us to move quickly on a piece of legislation that is good for the people, that protects the rights of the people, that protects democracy. It adds to it, and I think we should not delay it any longer.

I'm pleased that the Attorney General finally—and when I say "finally," it's because the bill has already received quite extensive consultation through the various stakeholders. So even though we have received so much consultation, the bill is here for debate today. We want to move it on and, yes, even though it has received the consultation, maybe there are some areas where we can improve the bill.

The bill calls for the protection and the rights of our citizens, of individuals. I want to give a bit of perspective, even though I don't have too much time, Speaker.

I have to go back to my municipal years as well, and they were extremely learning years. In 1978-79, if you can think of the downtown city of North York, there wasn't a downtown in those days. Then what happened slowly was there were, among the many, two very

particular developers that were competing on who would buy the most and build the most, to create this downtown, and then application throughout the city as well.

Then these two wonderful developers, I have to say—because it turned out to be good as well—they had the best planners and best lawyers you could afford in all the entire country. But the way they were going about getting their development or redevelopment—it was day and night. It was so much learning. One of them would come to local community meetings—we would call them preliminary meetings. We would hold those meetings usually in the evenings to give local residents, community ratepayers, the best time, the best chance, to come and express their views. Depending on the time and the application, we would have one lawyer who would sit quietly and listen and say, “We’ll do our best to accommodate you.” Then he would come to council and beg the mayor and the council and say, “This is what I would like to have. This is what I would like to propose to the community and make them happy so you don’t hold me back and waste time and whatever.” And most of the time, this would work, Speaker.

Then we had the other lawyer, representing a great developer, say, “I was at the meeting last week, and I know how these people feel, Mr. Mayor, and I have to tell you that we have already applied to the Ontario Municipal Board,” when the city didn’t even have a chance yet to hear the applications. This constituted taking a lot of time of our council, a lot of time of the community and ratepayers, and it constituted a long delay of the application as well. So they were getting all rattled up. This didn’t work well with the community and was working against the community.

Then we would have the other lawyer that would come and say, “Members of council and Mr. Mayor, we want to give a majority representing on this application here. We want to give the minority”—meaning those residents in there—“the opportunity to be heard. We believe that it is important that, for democracy to survive, the majority has to give the minority an opportunity to be heard.” He was going about it in a total different way.

I have seen too many times, too many applications, too many residents, too many ratepayers’ organizations not speaking what they wanted to speak about for the fear of a very strategic lawsuit. We were all intimidated.

This is a good piece of legislation. This is about time that we do it, to protect the rights of our citizens. After all—is my time up, Speaker? No, not yet. After all, if we don’t protect the rights of the taxpayers, we cannot leave it to the interests of greedy developers. I have seen that time and time again. The fact is that developers, in most cases, if not in all cases, come in, build, take their profit and run away. They go elsewhere to do the same thing over and over again. The ones that have to deal with that particular application that was perhaps unsuitable to the mix of the existing community are the ones to live with it.

The plan in principle, in a way, is very simple. I would remember that some of the good planners came to us and

said, “This application is good because it improves. It does something better to the existing community.” The others would say, “This is the application. This is what we want and this is what we want.” And they would force their way through. The principle of planning is what improvements that particular application brings to the local community. This is what we should be looking for, because when something is done, that community has to live with the consequences.

We should support individuals and individual organizations that want to come out and speak their mind. We have courts of law that say that if you’re not within your democratic rights, you may suffer the consequences. I think this goes for both. But when developers become bullies and have expensive and well-oiled and well-spoken lawyers and they face individual taxpayers, it’s very difficult. I think we are here to do the right thing.

1640

I’m truly pleased to see that all the members who have spoken have spoken in support of this piece of legislation. Late as it may be, let’s not wait any longer. We are doing second reading. We want to move it over to committee—and I hope this will get further input—and bring it back. But I believe this is the type of legislation, especially when it meets all members’ approval, that we should move forward. It’s one of those pieces of legislation where the public will benefit, and aren’t we all here to do that?

Also, Speaker, most importantly, it will send a message to the general public, including developers, including the professional field—lawyers, planners and developers—that they should think twice about running roughshod over local communities, individual citizens and organizations, solely because they think they are entitled to get what they want and not what is the best thing they can do for that community, and so that that application that they represent does not infringe on the local community. I think it should improve on the local community and not get what they want by force.

Speaker, my time is up, I can see, but it has been a pleasure speaking on—

Mr. Steve Clark: You’ve got 10 minutes.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Ten minutes, yes. I’ve been told I can do 11 if I want, but I’ll leave 10 minutes for the next one.

Speaker, I was very pleased to have been allowed a few minutes, especially on a bill that I have a lot of sympathy for. I have seen too many times the situation where citizens were run down by developers and their lawyers. I hope that we can push this through soon and finally bring some closure and pass this legislation, which will do good for all the citizens throughout our province—not just in my riding or my colleague’s riding or the others, but I think it’s good for all the province of Ontario. I thank you, Speaker, for your time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: It’s a pleasure for me to respond to the minister responsible for seniors and his comments that he put on the record regarding Bill 83.

I really liked his speaking style this afternoon, where he brought back memories of my days in municipal politics. He talked about those meetings where you got together, you worked on a development and you sat down with the lawyers and the planners and the developers and the residents and really had that type of discussion—those were the times that you felt the process worked. I'm sure that anyone who's sitting here who has that municipal experience can drive or walk through their communities and be able to point to the developments that had that consensus, had that discussion, had that give and take; and, just as easily, we can walk by those developments and say, "Those were the knock-down, drag-out fights that ended up going to the OMB or involved litigation."

When the process works, it's pretty sweet. It's pretty satisfying, as a politician, to go through a development process as a member of council and have something work, have the concerns and the questions of the residents being taken into consideration. So I really appreciate the minister's comments today.

I do want to quote from the bill, because I think it really talks about the essence of what we're debating this afternoon. It's section 2, where it says, "The act is amended by adding the following sections:

"Prevention of Proceedings that Limit Freedom of Expression on Matters of Public Interest (Gag Proceedings)....

"Purposes

"137.1(1)....

"(a) to encourage individuals to express themselves on matters of public interest;

"(b) to promote broad participation in debates on matters of public interest;

"(c) to discourage the use of litigation as a means of unduly limiting expression on matters of public interest"—Speaker, thanks for your indulgence—"and

"(d) to reduce the risk that participation by the public in debates on matters of public interest will be hampered by fear of legal action."

That's the essence of the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's an honour to be able to stand once again and speak on behalf of my constituents in Timiskaming-Cochrane in response to the minister on Bill 83.

Before I begin my short comments, it sounds a bit like old home week for former mayors and councillors, because they have a lot to do—

Mr. Steve Clark: It brings back memories.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, for us all.

For me, the memories of SLAPP suits are a bit more recent. I'm happy that the one we were involved with in Iroquois Falls has been dropped, and I'd like to thank the Minister of Health for her work.

I'm glad that she's here. I'd like to thank her for her work. We don't always agree on everything, but I think we worked well together on this issue. I think the things

that should have happened, happened, and I'd really like to thank her.

The SLAPP suit thing hit me very personally. In Iroquois Falls, it struck a personal chord, and I hope I get more time to speak on this, if we have enough time for us all to debate it. One of the reasons I got started in politics—I was a councillor—was because I was a victim of a SLAPP suit. The first time I ran for provincial politics was out of desperation to try to get out of that SLAPP suit. Four days before the writ was dropped, the suit was dropped. Hopefully, I will have more time sometime to go into more detail.

This bill is very important to people who have been involved in this, because it strikes at the core. I almost lost my business. People who are threatened by these, who are part of the process—their whole lives are torn apart. This is a very important piece of legislation, and I hope that we can move it through the process.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the minister responsible for seniors, Mr. Sergio, the member from York West, for his comments this afternoon on Bill 83.

I think that, at first blush, most people who are following this debate, which is a piece of legislation aimed at preventing people from being muzzled and being able to participate in public discourse, probably might not view this as a consumer protection piece. We've brought in several pieces of legislation over the course of the last year or two dealing with consumer protection, things like water heaters and energy retailers going door to door, who, by and large, were taking advantage of seniors. We've brought in consumer protection legislation around cellphone bills and making sure real estate rules are clear so that people have to see written offers and that sort of thing. But I would say this particular bill before us, Bill 83, which is referred to as anti-SLAPP, is no less a consumer protection piece than any of those other examples I have just listed.

It's often phrased and characterized here in the Legislature as being—without, I don't think, anybody actually saying it—more of a big-city, big-developer, OMB kind of issue, where folks walk into city halls around the province and have these development proposals and want these to move forward, and they're lobbying the local politicians and the like. If things don't seem to be going their way or if they are receiving some opposition from NGOs, public groups or just individuals, then the lawsuit comes in and they try to muzzle them. People tend to think of these things as primarily big city, but I can tell you that's not the case.

There's a great example in my neck of the woods that I'm looking for an opportunity to talk a little bit more about. I'm hoping I'll get 10 or 20 minutes over the next couple of days to talk a bit more on Bill 83 and bring a bit of a local, smaller-town flavour to exactly why this particular piece of legislation, Bill 83, is very important.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's a privilege to rise on the comments made by the minister for seniors.

There's no question that this bill has all-party support. I think the question that came is why it took so long. This bill has been before us in a few versions before, now picked up by the government, finally, after I guess many years.

Maybe the question might be, "Why now?" There are lots of issues before this province. We see lots of people, even in my riding, who are suffering from job losses, and we're looking at something that's been around for many years and something that we were hoping would have more meat on the table now coming ahead.

1650

Speaking of my former days as mayor of South Glengarry, we also had issues with frivolous—I wouldn't say lawsuits, but referrals back to the OMB as a way to stall things, stall projects that really had public support. Sometimes we see, as you go on, people being bullied and muzzled through ways of somebody else getting their way or trying to stop an action that really is in the best interests of the public. So as I say, this legislation is surely needed. We've seen it around and we need to put something through.

Some of the issues I remember—it brings back memories—it's almost comical with some of the charges brought up. You look back, but they're affecting people. No matter how small the charge is, when it's affecting people who maybe don't have the most financial resources, it is a worry, it is a lawyer, it is a big bill. So we're glad to see something through that actually stops this sort of action and allows people to live a normal life.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments.

I return to the minister responsible for seniors.

Hon. Mario Sergio: I want to thank all the members for their generous contributions to the debate this afternoon: from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, Thunder Bay–Atikokan, Timiskaming–Cochrane and, as well, Leeds–Grenville. It's good to see that we are bringing a particular piece of legislation such as Bill 83 and moving it forward.

It came to my mind at one particular event that—again, when you have dealt with such an issue that had and continues to have a very deep impact on local communities, I have witnessed what happened in my own community over the years and today we are suffering the consequences, I have to say, because of what happened in the past with some of those applications.

I remember one particular application, Speaker, on Don Mills—I want to mention this one because I think the developer who really worked with the community ended up getting not one building but ended up with two buildings. What happened was the other builder and the other lawyer and a planner who were really forcefully pushing something on the community that they didn't want, they had two buildings recommended by staff and then they ended up getting one particular building. That shows, Speaker, that it does not pay to be a bully, espe-

cially when you're dealing with a massive application where it infringes upon the existing community. I say, and I've said before, that democracies work when the majority gives the minority an opportunity to be heard.

This bill has already received considerable input. We have debated it in this House; it's going through second reading. But I'm saying that whenever we send it to the committee, I would beg the committee members sitting on that particular committee to do their diligent work, make recommendations, improve the bill in whatever way, and then bring it back because this is something that we want to do, and our communities and our people expect us to do it.

Speaker, I thank you, and I thank all the members for their contributions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for an opportunity here. The reason I say this right now—I'm asking, again, for indulgence—is because I did definitely want to speak on Bill 122. I had spoken to people involved in education this week and in anticipation of speaking I certainly want to make remarks that:

—the chair of the board for the Durham District School Board is Joe Allin, as well as the director Martyn Beckett;

—the chair of the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board, in my riding, is Diane Lloyd, and the director of education is Rusty Hick, who was actually the principal when my children were in high school;

—the separate board chair is Granville Anderson—who's from my riding, of course, and I represent him effectively as I would anyone—and Barb McMorrow is the director of education for the Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board, and a brand new school director from the Toronto board, I believe;

—Karen Valentine is the board chair of the Durham Catholic District School Board, and Anne O'Brien is the senior director of the Durham Catholic District School Board. So there it is, on the record.

Bill 122 is a governance issue, and I will eventually move on to the current bill, Bill 83. But I want to put it on the record that I was shut down today by the House leader—cruelly, I would say—having been silenced. I wanted to speak on it, and I mean it passionately, but I am moving on to Bill 83.

Bill 83 is another bill. It's ironic, really, if you think about it. Bill 83 is the SLAPP bill, which is really made up of three statutes dealing with the court system. It's dealing with the Courts of Justice Act. It's also dealing with the Libel and Slander Act. It deals with the Statutory Powers Procedure Act. Here's, really, where the irony is: It's silencing dissenting voices. That's exactly what this government is doing: trying to silence me, because I'm not particularly in agreement with some of their positions. But my duty is just exactly that. I'm a member of the opposition, respectfully, under the leadership of Tim Hudak. This is the irony, that they would call this

bill—it's what I call symbiotic justice almost, if that's an appropriate term.

Anyway, getting on to the bill, some of the finest remarks I want to put this on the record. The finest remarks I heard were last Thursday afternoon in the quiet solitude of this place, because there was virtually no one here. I shouldn't say that, of course. The member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, who is the NDP critic on this file, did a remarkable job. I would say to the viewers here: It's worth looking it up. He is a trained lawyer. He gave a very informed, I would say, and compassionate speech for an hour. Can you imagine speaking on this bill for an hour?

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Was it two hours? It seemed like two hours. But, no, honestly, it was a very, very coherent speech. I'm sure he did it from the time he was in court. But I did ask him, in the two-minute rebuttal: Had he ever sent one of those—when he was practising law—intimidating letters? That's the real issue here.

Like others, I served for a number of years on council in the local municipality in the region of Durham. It was great experience, because there there are no shackles by belonging to some party where you have to toe the party line. Our line is pretty—we're pretty conservative on this side of the House; they're very liberal on that side. They have, really, no standards. We have pretty solid standards. You can always trust where we're coming from.

But here's the issue here on this particular bill: Force and power can change people's ability to exercise their freedom. And that's fundamental to this whole process that we're in here today. That's the very premise of the democratic system. In fact, I believe one of the inscriptions here is, "Hear the other side." If I'm not mistaken, it's inscribed here. I know you know all these arcane pieces of information, but it does say, "Listen to the other side." So I encourage the government to listen to the points of view of not just ourselves but the NDP.

I would say that there are a couple of provisions that I heard while listening to the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, as well as, I'd say, more recently, the minister responsible for seniors, the member from York West. He's a very genuine person. He has been here quite a while as well. But our critic from York–Simcoe did a very, very exemplary job in terms of representing our position on this, with all due respect.

Again, the use of force in this system, I can say this—for the record, it's important, because this is on the transcript. Some years ago, I would say—let's see now. I think it was before I was here, so that's about 20 years ago. It seems so long. Is it really that long?

Interjection: You're so young. You look so young.

Mr. John O'Toole: I must have been elected when I was 10. No. But my mother-in-law and father-in-law had a place right at the opening of Big Bay Point Marina. They had a cottage there on the corner. There's a little peninsula as you go into the Big Bay Point Marina. They had the cottage right on the corner. Eventually, for particular reasons, they sold it. I'm pretty sure they sold

it to the original developers, Geranium Corp. I followed it, because it was quite unusual. I was disappointed that they didn't keep the cottage, because we used to go there for free. What's wrong with that? But it was probably fairly expensive.

They kept the boat at the marina. It was quite a pleasant marina and all that stuff, but they gave up cottaging because it was just really too much work and none of the kids would do any of the work. They only wanted to come there and have all the meals prepared for them.

The reason I say that: I did follow it, and there was a clear case there of bullying—I say that in the protection of where we are—where the proponent—I wouldn't say this outside of here, or I'd be in a SLAPP. I'm liable to be slapped around, but that's what this is about.

1700

You will find that our side always puts justice first, because doing the right thing is the right policy. Quite honestly, even listening to the LTEP today, the long-term energy plan, the three-year plan—they've been here 10 years and the thing is a mess. The whole energy file is completely destroyed. Imagine paying somebody 80 cents a kilowatt hour for solar power and selling it for five cents. What's wrong with this business plan?

But I will stick to Bill 83, because I usually get criticized for not doing it.

One of the strongest provisions in this is important. When it's a trivial accusation or a vexatious accusation, there are provisions under the Courts of Justice Act for early dismissal, so that the judge can listen quickly and dismiss the case very early. But what can happen, and has happened—I can tell you of a case when I was a councillor. I shouldn't, but I may use names. There was a very well-respected developer in the town. This well-respected developer was Mario Veltri. In fact, I had known the gentleman for a number of years. He had been very generous with the town, a smaller, kind of mid-range developer. He tried to put a development in near the ski club where I was actually a member. It's called the Kirby Ski Club, a nice, quiet little ski place for modest families like mine—five kids, and we skied for virtually nothing. Here's the issue. He wanted to build a couple of condos there. You look at Blue Mountain. This is a success story. Guess what? All the lefties—I shouldn't say that. All the lefties came out and hassled the guy to the point where he was almost bankrupted because he had so much tied up in money and the development.

So there are two sides to this. Remember: If you have people who have the money that Greenpeace and other organizations have, they can delay, deny and dither, and guess what's happening? The poor person who's trying to create jobs, build homes, do plumbing, electricity and all these things, is being set aside. In all fairness here, I'm just putting forward the other side.

You'll get a mayor or regional chair who is a bit bullied, and they want to see things go their way. The official plan states that certain types of developments are

in order, and somebody makes an application. Oops, wait a minute here. They want to build something that's 15 storeys high and in the bylaw it's 14 storeys. Well, all of it—shortage of affordable housing—can be held up at the will of a council that's a bit confrontational on a particular development.

I'm going to bring a case in point. This one is just a recent OMB decision. This decision was in the municipality of Clarington. The community within that is called Courtice. In Courtice there are no high-rise developments, okay? The developer was an in-fill application in a fairly dense location—they're mostly town-homes and link homes. They were putting up a four-storey apartment building. It's close to transit; it's close to urban convenience shopping and that. The council supported it, without too much controversy and debate. Well, the neighbourhood broke into a kerfuffle about it and were opposed to it. But this shows that their voices were heard.

I watched it, because having been a councillor there at one time, I was quite interested in it—boy, I wish I had an hour. Anyway, the fact is that I watched it, and this very modest couple—I did meet them, I did speak with them; I gave them some advice, as is my wont to do. I encouraged them to challenge it. Now I'm going to interject a small bit of additional information here; my colleague from Leeds—Grenville would probably know. I go back to the 1980s, when I was a councillor, so it's not relevant history, really. There used to be intervenor status. In other words, if you were to establish intervenor status, you got funding to challenge the SLAPP or the lawsuit against you.

Now, during the mid-1990s, that was cancelled. It was cancelled because it was seen to be abused. I think it was abused, and I think you need a bit of a clearing house. Even today, as I go back, those people who were challenging the developer of that mid-rise—I wouldn't call it a high-rise—won on their own, I think, just speaking for themselves before the Ontario Municipal Board.

Now, at one time I knew the chair of the municipal board—very well, in fact. In fact, she was the mayor of the municipality where I served. She was the first woman chair—I'm giving her a bit of a shout-out here—of planning for Durham region. She is a very competent lady. She had been the mayor of the lower-tier municipality. Her name was Marie Hubbard. In fairness, she was appointed to the Ontario Municipal Board because of her experience and her professional acumen, really. She was a nurse, but she was a very thorough, unbiased person.

She eventually became the chair of OMB and eventually served as an interim chair under the McGuinty government as well. I gave her a shout-out. That's a tough job, listening to the applicants from both sides and trying to do the right thing, following the rules and not making them up as you go along.

She was involved in a number of very high-level commercial cases about how much commercialization is done in a subdivision or in a plan, where there is a certain amount of capacity for so much space allocated for commercial and economic development things.

Right today, the members here should know that the current Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has a discussion paper right now that's out there. It's developing three things: reviewing the Ontario Municipal Board, which they promised they would do—which they haven't done. There was a report done in 2010 on this very subject, the SLAPP, the strategic lawsuit stuff.

So I don't trust them. I don't like to use that word. It's not a personal thing. The government and their agenda is a bit shifty; it's sort of like walking on sinking sand. That's where I don't trust, because they've got this thing out—we've got this bill. I hope it goes to committee.

I hope the findings that she's undergoing right now in her public consultation on Ontario Municipal Board reform—and the other part of that is another thing that the viewers of Ontario should be aware of. The other part of it is they're going to adjust the lot levies, the development charges.

Well, guess what? Do you know what the development charges are now? The NDP don't get this, because they contradicted my input on it the last time, and I'd expect them to withdraw and then resign. But, after that, what I'd like them to do—no. Right now, on a regular single-family development, the actual development charges are between \$30,000 and \$40,000. When the builder goes in to get the building permit—here are the plans for the house; he hands it in—they write a cheque—he or she writes a cheque—for \$30,000 or \$40,000.

Now, that's important. That \$30,000 or \$40,000 is put into a reserve fund to build future infrastructure: libraries, fire halls, skateboard parks, water parks and things like that for children and youth—and adults, for that matter.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, I am.

But I would just say, that \$30,000 or \$40,000 does not come from the developer. It comes from the young homebuyer, their first home. Let's put some numbers around it: \$30,000 or \$40,000 added to the end of your mortgage. Let's say the average house is around \$250,000 to \$300,000. That added—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, this is how it works. If they want to contradict me in the two-minute, try and defuse my comments.

About \$40,000 is added to the very end of the mortgage. You're paying the last dollar off on a 30-year mortgage at about the last 25 years. You've had that \$40,000 for 25 years at, say, 5%. Interest is going to go up; it's probably going to go up 2% within about 15 months. Imagine what you pay for that \$40,000. That \$40,000 over 25 years is probably costing you \$200,000. Then we talk about affordable housing. How absurd. But I digress.

This bill here doesn't have a lot to do with that, but there is a discussion on the Ontario Municipal Board reform, which should be brought to the committee, I think, during deliberations on this bill. I put that to the minister on the record here today, that during the hearings on Bill 83, which will probably occur right after the

election next year in May, the report from the committee should be brought forward at that time.

So I am in support of it. I have concerns, as all of us would know to do, because anything where power is used to intimidate another person's behaviour is completely unacceptable in a democratic process.

Our leader has made several points that, on several times, he has said to the Premier. Premier Wynne, we cleared the decks. We've given you a number of bills, of which 105 is one of them. And yet, they have no jobs plan. That was a two-party deal. This was a deal made—not behind closed doors; we've been open about it. We allowed them to get several pieces of legislation. Some of them were important, things like tanning beds and things like that, not smoking on balconies—what's that about? But anyway, we gave them what they wanted. We wanted jobs and the economy.

Our whole *raison d'être* is about jobs and the economy. I look at the young pages here, in their second-last week. What are the jobs of the future for you? You can't all be teachers. You can't all be nurses. You can't all be politicians. Everybody can't work for the government, so what job would you choose in another sector? A trade would be a good thing, or a computer specialist, an animator or something, but you've got to have skill sets to translate into, "I do this for you; you pay me that amount of money."

This bill itself—I think we are in general agreement, but there's always more to be said. I think that at this point in time it doesn't seem like a lot of people are listening to me, so I'm going to adjourn the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. O'Toole has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

I return to the member for Durham, who still has the floor.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, in that case, I'm going to be very, very firm about this: I'm very disappointed. Those members who are sitting out back here should be fired. They're supposed to be on duty. They should be here. I thought, for instance, that there were some people here—I'm not going to name names, but Bailey is here, Clark is here; there are some that aren't here, and I'm somewhat disappointed.

But here's the point: They weren't paying attention, so I introduced a little bit of flavour here. I could say this to you—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the House to come to order. The member for Durham has the floor, and I need to be able to hear him.

I return to the member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm going to attempt once more to adjourn the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm advised that the member can't move a motion to adjourn the debate twice during once speech.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'll adjourn the House, then.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. O'Toole has moved the adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute *bell*.

The division bells rang from 1713 to 1743.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Will the members please take their seats?

Mr. O'Toole has moved the adjournment of the House. All those in favour of the motion will please rise and be counted by the table.

All those opposed will please rise and be counted by the table staff.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 1; the nays are 44.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I must declare the motion lost.

The member for Durham has the floor.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm somewhat overcome by the lack of support. However, it has never stopped me.

If I had time, I would comment on the three important aspects of this bill. I am against intimidation and the use of force to change people's rights to express themselves, and this is why I really support the bill.

It's funny that this government is actually using sort of a time allocation motion, which is almost like a SLAPP motion, to stop debate on Bill 122. So the contradiction is far too obvious, in my view. I originally wanted to speak on Bill 122, and I've been truncated. I cannot speak on a bill that I'm very passionate about, and that's what this bill, in my opinion, is about. It's a contradiction. Bill 122 and Bill 83 don't fit on the same day—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, it's very apropos that I should actually do the questions and comments right now for the member for Durham, because he really wants to speak on this bill, and so did I. My rotation was next, yet he presented a motion—the first motion was to adjourn the debate. Their party didn't have enough people to stand behind him, and therefore he tried to bring another motion to adjourn the debate when all his members came running into the House, and then that didn't work because one member cannot bring the same motion. Then he wanted to adjourn the House. Surely, 30 minutes go by—I'm still disappointed that I did not get to speak on this bill.

Speaker, the games people play—it's just unbelievable. The Liberals want to extend the House till midnight; these guys want to adjourn the House early.

Let's get down to the business of the people and get results for them. Let's get debating this SLAPP legisla-

tion so we can get on to other priorities that people are expecting us to talk about, which is a jobs plan; it's health care; it's affordability; it's accountability—a Financial Accountability Office for this government.

We are here to work. New Democrats have been working right from the beginning. We're working in a minority government. I just want to say, let's stop playing games on the Liberal and the Conservative sides. Let's take the example of what New Democrats do: Roll up our sleeves. Let's do the hard work. Let's make sure we have health care, a jobs plan and affordability for the province of Ontario. The people deserve us to be here and actually speak on their behalf and make sure it gets done.

Interjections.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to say thank you to the member—what's your riding?

Mr. Bill Walker: Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound—for the backup. He's my doo-wop girl. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I must remind members that the two-minute responses are intended to relate back to the member who gave the speech.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Speaker, I think that's going to be a hard act for anyone in this House to follow, especially—that's the first reference in my 15-or-some months to a doo-wop or a doo-wop girl that I've heard here. Maybe we can get a clarification for what that is.

I had the chance a little bit earlier today to speak to this particular bill. It is a bill that deals with process and procedure and fairness. I think the one thing that is clear from some of the—and I said this in my remarks earlier today: that it is unfortunate that we've seen both opposition parties here today take advantage of process and procedure in this House to try to thwart this government's attempts to move forward with the important deliberations and debate and discussions here that the people of all of our communities expect us to deal with. So I would really call on all members, with the opportunity that they have left for debate today and in the coming days, to focus on the issues that matter to the people of our respective communities.

This particular legislation, Speaker, is extremely important to individuals who have worked very, very hard, from the panel itself that brought forward the recommendations, to the government that has helped create this bill.

Speaker, in listening to the member from London–Fanshawe, what struck me in her remarks this afternoon was that she stood in her place and made it seem like the games-playing has only occurred at the hands of the official opposition. Earlier today, when the members of the third party, the members of the Ontario NDP, had the chance to work with us to extend debate so that we could be here tonight working hard for the people of Ontario, working hard for the people of Kitchener and working hard for the people of London, they chose not to

participate. They chose not to be positive. They chose not to be constructive.

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So it's a little bit rich for that member from London–Fanshawe to stand in her place and accuse members of the Ontario PC Party of playing games when today, in this House, people watching at home, people from all of our communities, had a chance to see singular expertise in games-playing on the part of members of both parties, the Ontario PCs and Ontario NDP.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I will say again that the questions and comments are supposed to relate back to the member's speech, in this case the member for Durham's speech.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's absolutely a pleasure to stand up after my colleague from Durham. I've never seen a guy who rises to the occasion to ensure that he puts fact on the table—to hold the government's feet to the fire at every opportunity, and this is one of those occasions.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Doo-wop.

Mr. Bill Walker: But I do have to defer just a little bit, Mr. Speaker. The honourable member from London–Fanshawe called me the doo-wop. Well, I'm quite proud to be a doo-wop, as opposed to the flip-flop, because in the first budget, they sat on their hands and they didn't show up for work. The second time they had the chance to prop up the government, they voted in favour of this government to keep them up, and yet they call them corrupt every day in this House. So doo-wop, what-up, but let's not be part of the flip-flop.

We've been consistent in our ideals. We've been standing on our principles, saying that government has challenges, that government has run us into the ground, that government has doubled the debt, that government has no party plan for jobs. At the end of the day, I'm happy to be whatever they want to call me. I'm okay with that because I stand on principle and I'm consistent with all of my colleagues. Our job is to be the official opposition, the Queen's opposition. We'll always stand here and truly defend the people of Ontario, the taxpayers who are fronting the bill for every decision that's made in this House.

We're not going to prop up that party that has decimated this province, that has brought in the highest energy rates in the province and is running people out of this province at every opportunity. The only jobs plan they have is for moving companies to move people to the United States. That's the only increase in employment that I have seen.

Mr. Speaker, this bill needs to happen, but at the end of the day, we should be debating jobs, jobs and more jobs, and not the ones going south of the border because of their foiled energy policy. Today they brought in a long-term energy plan, and all it was was more smoke and mirrors. They're going to increase the hydro bill by 30%. We will not accept it; we do not accept it. I will not flip-flop. I stand behind my word.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments relating to the member for Durham's speech on Bill 83?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I think we know why we don't have debates until the 12 o'clock, early evening hours now. My friend from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, my flip-flop, doo-wop colleague, I really enjoy always hearing you talk here in the House.

I was actually here to listen to the member from Durham. Unfortunately, last week he wasn't ready for 83, so he was "slapped," and this morning he was ready for 122 and unfortunately he was slapped again and he couldn't speak to it.

Now, he tried this afternoon to adjourn the debate and he was slapped once more, but then he decided to adjourn the House, and one last time—he was even slapped by his colleagues. So it's really interesting.

We have debate and, in all due seriousness, the one thing that he did bring up in his speech this afternoon was the comments that were made by my colleague the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton, and I'll try and bring those points quite quickly, within the last minute that I have.

One of them was on the cost of speaking. The second one was on protecting those rights for the cost of speaking. The third one was on the process, a process so that we don't discourage and we empower individuals in having the ability to talk about the things that are concerning to their neighbours, to their communities. And the other that we were talking about was also levelling the playing field so that if there is a suit that is going to be submitted, there is going to be an opportunity where people aren't going to be silenced, that they won't have the fear to speak up, and that we as legislators, who have the ability of bringing in the right pieces of legislation—that we bring these people in, that we embrace their opportunity to speak.

So in all due fairness and likeliness, I really enjoyed the last hour that we've just been in here in the House, and I always enjoy being in the House when the member from Durham is speaking.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member from Durham has two minutes to respond.

Mr. John O'Toole: I feel somewhat saddened, actually, and disappointed. There was a vote today, and I felt it was the House against me.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: But it's true; I'm trying to do the right thing. This is what you call being slapped, and this bill, the SLAPP bill—I think all of the comments were not related to the specifics. With all due respect, Speaker, I thank you for standing up for me, because I was defending the people's right to say what they think is right. The government is trying to bully me into submission here by not allowing me to speak.

The real fact here is that we agree with the right of encouragement of Bill 83. We intend for it, of course, to go to committee. In committee, I would expect that they would finally file a report from the Ontario Municipal Board. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has a discussion paper out there now with the municipalities about reforming the Ontario Municipal Board, which is central to the debate on Bill 83. They've promised, like they've promised many things, to reform it, and have done nothing. We'll see what they really mean.

This bill—we'll see if they even call it. I'd be disappointed, because I'm suspicious right now, because I've lost trust with the government, especially today. The long-term energy plan turned out to be a short-term energy plan. It's going to get them through the next election.

Our leader insists that we continually refer to what we're doing here about creating jobs and a strong economy. That, to me, is the most important part. This bill, in my opinion, is a bill that speaks to people's rights, and I want to make it very clear that that's precisely what this side supports.

We particularly like two parts. The early-dismissal provision—when it's frivolous and vexatious, the judge can rule immediately and, on top of that, can assign costs.

Now, when the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton was speaking, I asked him: Did he ever write one of those intimidating letters that he referred to, the \$6-million letter that says, "If you don't shut up, you're going to pay up"?

Thank you very much.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being close to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1757.

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Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

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Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation

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Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
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Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	Niagara Falls	

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France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
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Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson
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Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 3 December 2013

Mardi 3 décembre 2013



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 3 December 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 3 décembre 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MODERNIZING REGULATION OF THE LEGAL PROFESSION ACT, 2013 LOI DE 2013 SUR LA MODERNISATION DE LA RÉGLEMENTATION DE LA PROFESSION JURIDIQUE

Mr. Gerretsen moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 111, An Act to amend the Law Society Act and the Solicitors Act / Projet de loi 111, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le Barreau et la Loi sur les procureurs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Debate.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, I'm very pleased to rise in the House this morning for the second reading of the proposed Modernizing Regulation of the Legal Profession Act. The bill reflects the law society's commitment to supporting the public interest by ensuring that the people of Ontario are served by lawyers and paralegals who meet the highest standards of professional conduct.

I want to thank Tom Conway, the treasurer of the law society, and its governing body, which is known as Convocation, for outstanding leadership that continues to enhance the reputation of more than 44,000 lawyers in Ontario and almost 5,500 paralegals in this province.

Let me just remind my honourable colleagues here of the five proposed changes that Bill 111 would implement. First of all, it would establish a tribunal which would oversee the law society's current hearing and appeals panels, and provide for the appointment of a full-time non-bencher lawyer chair.

Secondly, it would authorize the law society to suspend a lawyer or paralegal's licence for failure to pay legal costs related to a discipline hearing in those cases where legal costs have been ordered against the individual involved.

Third, it would clarify that the law society can receive solicitor-client privileged information from any person, such as a client, and introduce such information in proceedings while protecting that privilege.

Next, it would increase the number of paralegal members of the law society's governing body from two to five, to provide for a fair representation of paralegals.

Finally, it would align legislation with the current practice by providing that paralegals may charge for providing legal services.

We as a government can take great pride in the changes that we've made to help promote a dynamic and innovative paralegal profession. Speaker, you may recall, that when the Access to Justice Act came into force in 2007, one of the most significant achievements was to make Ontario the first jurisdiction in North America to prescribe the regulation of paralegals. In our province, back in 2007, this important task was carried out by the Law Society of Upper Canada—the law society of Ontario, as such. Now we stand at the point where the paralegal profession is more mature and is deserving of greater recognition within the legal community and the province as a whole.

One of the changes would increase the number of paralegal directors on the board of directors, commonly known as Convocation—and they would be known as paralegal benchers of the law society's governing body—from two to five. Now, as I'm sure that all the members of the House, and certainly the two critics in the other two parties, are aware, it is important that this bill be dealt with promptly so that the number of paralegals can be increased at Convocation in March 2014. Elections of both the paralegal directors and of the lawyers as benchers only happens every four years, and that happens to be early next year. So in order to have more benchers in place for the next term, we need to move forward with this amendment as soon as possible and be finalized before the end of this year.

Now, two other amendments contained in Bill 111 would impact on paralegals. One is a proposal to authorize the law society to suspend the licence of a lawyer or paralegal through a simple administrative process for failure to pay legal costs that have been awarded against them as related to a discipline proceeding.

Interjections.

Hon. John Gerretsen: You know, it's very interesting, Speaker, how the members opposite are so talkative this morning. I hope that they will fully support this bill, because it's for the betterment of the people of Ontario, so that they get the best possible legal service. I'm sure that they will do that; I'm absolutely convinced of that.

One is a proposal to authorize the law society to suspend the licence of a paralegal or a lawyer through a simple administrative process for failure to pay legal costs related to a discipline proceeding—I think I've already stated that. The law society currently allows for a suspension of a licence when the licensee has failed to

comply with such a cost order. However, the process involves an application to the law society's hearing panel, which increases case load and results in time delays. Basically what we're saying is that if costs are awarded against an individual, then the order can be made immediately. That's a change we want to make in the bill.

The other amendment that would affect paralegals is a simple housekeeping change that would bring the legislation in line with current practice. This change would amend the Solicitors Act to set out that paralegals can charge for providing legal services. Currently, even though they're providing those services and they're obviously getting paid for them, the Solicitors Act, technically speaking, prevents that from happening.

These amendments are important in order to support our government's economic plan to continue building a dynamic and innovative business climate with which I'm sure we all agree.

We also need to support the law society to ensure that they can continue to provide effective regulation for all of the professionals under its jurisdictions. It's interesting, Speaker, that back in 2007, when the paralegals were first licensed and brought under the Law Society of Upper Canada, there were about 2,200 in the province of Ontario. That has increased to over 5,000 currently licensed paralegals who provide a tremendously good service in many of the administrative tribunals and many of the other functions in which their scope of practice allows them to operate.

Over the past 30 years, in Canadian common law the concept of solicitor-client privilege has grown and is now considered a quasi-judicial right. Generally, privilege may be seen as coming into force when communications from a client to a professional legal advisor are made in confidence. These communications cannot be disclosed unless the client gives up the right to that privilege. However, the concept has grown to include, for example, information offered in closed hearings. The current legislation says that the law society can use information received from a lawyer or paralegal in a hearing and that such information remains protected. But the law, as it currently stands, is silent about information received from others, such as clients, and this information may be vital in conducting investigations and proceedings. The proposed amendment would allow for privileged information to be received from clients, and other people, and introduced in proceedings without loss of privilege.

0910

Finally, the establishment of a tribunal, a hearings tribunal: How the law society treats cases of potential misconduct is a matter of vital concern to the general public, as well as to its members and to all who have dealings with our legal system. Since 1999, the operational structure for the law society's hearing process has been divided into two parts: a hearing panel to adjudicate allegations of professional misconduct, and an appeal panel to hear appeals of the hearing panel's decisions or orders. This system met the needs of the day, but now the law society needs a more effective structure and to im-

prove quality assurance. By giving legislative authority for a new internal tribunal that would oversee the law society's current hearing and appeals panels, we can ensure that it's both independent and effective, with a full-time lawyer who's not a benchler as a chair.

Speaker, all of these changes are contained in Bill 111 and would help modernize the regulation of the legal profession in Ontario. Lawyers play an extremely important part in our legal system, and so do paralegals. They have been recognized in this province since 2007; the numbers of them have grown. The people of Ontario have benefited from that, and we want to modernize the system. That's what this bill is all about. At the end of the day, the result would be more efficient, effective, accountable and accessible services, both for the public and for the professionals regulated by the Law Society of Upper Canada.

I once again want to thank Tom Conway, the treasurer of the Law Society of Upper Canada, and its governing body, Convocation, for their exemplary leadership in helping to ensure that the fine reputation of Ontario's legal profession remains second to none. I also want to thank Cathy Corsetti and the law society's paralegal standing committee for helping our government invigorate Ontario's economy by continuing to promote the development of a dynamic paralegal profession.

I know, Speaker, that when all is said and done, all of the members of this House will support this legislation and make sure that it has quick passage so that it can be put into effect by the end of the year, and so that when elections take place early next year—which only happen every four years—the paralegals can be increased on Convocation from their current status of having two members as part of the benchler community to five.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm surprised this bill was brought up this morning. It's a very technical bill, and the way the Attorney General spoke this morning, he seems to be in a bit of a bind. This needs to be done, and the question was raised, just in the period of the debate, of why they haven't brought this forward earlier. They've talked about more complicated things like tanning parlors, smoking on balconies and things like that. I'm surprised. This is so important—to modernize our justice system and specifically working in co-operation with the newly developing careers of paralegals, along with the legal community, the lawyers, who pretty well have control of it—that why wouldn't he have brought this forward?

I would wonder, in his response to the two minutes, if there has been a paper developed by them that preceded Bill 111, maybe you could mention that. And what were the primary things outside of the modernization and the section dealing with the ability for paralegals to legally charge fees for providing a service? I understand that's kind of a housekeeping issue. But you mentioned the word "modernize." There are a couple more panels, I understand, if you look at the section. They're hearing

panels. They now have to appear before a tribunal before they go to the hearing panels. These are things that the lay people here need to understand. Is modernizing providing more bureaucracy? It sort of sounds like that. I know they're going to have to work on a panel.

The new benchers group are going to be mixed with paralegals, I gather, and I'm anxious to hear a bit more.

I'm surprised the Attorney General—I have great respect for him, I might say, as a lawyer; I always like to think of him as the former mayor of Kingston. But in this role, I would have thought that maybe, though, you would have told us a bit more, used the hour. You had a whole hour to educate us in the lay community that need to be bought into the modernization that you referred to.

Thank you very much for the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions or comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'm happy to be able to join in the debate. I noticed earlier, and wanted to recognize, a number of people. Sheena Weir was in the public gallery. I wanted to recognize her for her great work and—oh, there she is. She has been doing a little bit of moving. I want to welcome Sheena to the House and thank her for her hard work on bringing this bill forward and assisting to make sure it gets passed in a timely manner. I also want to thank Tom Conway and all the benchers at Convocation for their great work.

The bill basically is just a step forward in terms of modernizing some of the practices that govern lawyers and paralegals in the province of Ontario. The law society now has a mandate to regulate paralegals, which brings paralegals into a regulated field. There are two areas. One is with respect to the way lawyers are sanctioned or the way lawyers are dealt with. One step forward is to ensure that for tribunals that hear any sort of complaints or the complaint process, having an independent and permanent chair would create a more efficient manner in which we deal with any complaints that come forward. I agree with the Attorney General in terms that it would strengthen both the way the law society deals with its own members, but also increase the public confidence in lawyers as well.

Similarly, given the fact that we have now included paralegals within the law society, there's also a recognition that to grow their profession and to increase, moving forward, the effectiveness of policies, incorporating paralegals and giving them a voice in terms of how the direction of the profession goes is also quite important.

I'll speak more about this when my time comes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Milloy: I listened with interest to the Attorney General's comments and to those of the opposition who were speaking with questions and comments. I think it's very important, Mr. Speaker, that we recognize two things: first of all, the importance of this piece of legislation to the legal profession, the law society, but that we also recognize that these are technical, administrative changes. I'm going to find it very

hard, in the course of debate, to find anyone in this Legislature that would oppose them. They're well thought out, they're based upon a great deal of consultation and, as the Attorney General pointed out in his speech, they are time-sensitive.

There's a reason to respond to my colleague opposite as to why the Attorney General only spoke for 10 minutes. It's because there is some urgency to this piece of legislation. We do not see it as a partisan piece of legislation or one that's controversial. By speaking for only 10 minutes, he would allow other members to participate in this leadoff debate, and hopefully we can come to an agreement between the three parties to move this through quickly because, as I say, there's nothing controversial here; there's nothing partisan.

Unfortunately, over the past number of weeks we have seen a lot of game-playing, particularly on the part of the official opposition. The other night I was quite frankly appalled that a ceremony to give medals of bravery to our service personnel was delayed for 20 minutes because they called a meaningless motion to adjourn debate at 10 minutes to 6, meaning the whole item was delayed.

Mr. Speaker, we were sent here with a minority mandate. That, in fact, has been put through, has been reinforced through the recent by-election results. As a minority government and opposition in a minority situation, we have to work together at times to put politics beside us. A good piece of legislation like this: Move it through with proper debate but in a quick way, which is in the best interest of the legal profession.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: A couple of things: I'm going to agree with you on a few items and then I'm going to vehemently disagree with you on a couple of items, government House leader, and I underline the word "government."

First of all, absolutely, Bill 111 is a non-partisan process bill that the law society needs to modernize and update their processes—great idea. However, this bill was introduced on October 1. We have not once, since October 1, had this bill before us to debate.

0920

For the benefit of the people who are listening to this debate, there is only one person in this chamber who decides what we debate. That is the government House leader. I'm sure he does it in consultation with his ministers. However, he does not do it in consultation with the PC and the NDP House leaders. It is not a debatable item. So the only time that we get to debate Bill 111, or anything else for that matter, is when the government House leader chooses to bring it forward.

I find it very frustrating that from October 1 until December 4 it sat on the docket and was not called a single time. We had many opportunities to debate lots of things. I would question your priorities about what you did bring forward for debate. However, the point is, the government House leader is who chooses and who decides what we debate in this chamber. Bill 111 is coming

forward today for the first time since its October 1 introduction, and I don't want to leave the impression that we in opposition are the ones who have been stalling this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The Attorney General has two minutes to respond.

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, I, too, want to welcome Sheena Weir, who is a friend to all of us here. I know she spent the last couple of days in my hometown of Kingston, taking courses at Queen's University, and I didn't realize she was going to be here today. She certainly feels very strongly about this bill and I know she has spoken to the critics and all three parties that this bill get passed as quickly as possible.

Speaker, we've already had an acknowledgement that this is a non-partisan bill, that this will be to the benefit of the people of Ontario, particularly those individuals who cannot afford a lawyer and are now requiring the services of a paralegal. At one time paralegals weren't that highly regarded in our society, but that all changed back in 2007 when a licensing regime came into place etc. It has worked well. The numbers have increased substantially, and we want to make sure that that is represented on the board of governors of the Law Society of Upper Canada by increasing that number from two to five, amongst the other changes that have been made here.

I am not going to get into a debate about whether or not you have the right to speak on a bill for as long as you want. I believe in democracy, and if you want to spend the next 25 hours for each and every member of the opposition to speak on this bill, for the length of time that you can, you can do that; you have a right to do that. But just remember, if you do that, you are basically doing it to the detriment of the people of Ontario, because they will not be able to benefit from the meaningful changes that everybody agrees on that are contained in this bill.

Let's put our partisan differences aside for a moment and let us truly do what is in the best interests of the people of Ontario, and that is to give this bill speedy passage. I know that former municipal people are here; they know how to do this stuff. Remember when you were on municipal council? A good idea came along and it was passed. Let's do the same thing here. Let's get this done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I appreciate the opportunity to respond. I would certainly want to begin with the indication by the Attorney General; he referred to a quick passage. As my colleague from Dufferin-Caledon has said, it's pretty hard to have quick passage when it takes two months from the time of the introduction of the bill to begin debate on it.

I want to say, first of all, that in responding to the government's bill to modernize regulation of the legal profession, Bill 111, I'm pleased to indicate that certainly we will support this bill, but I want to take some time to outline the reasons our caucus supports this bill. During

the opportunity that I have today, I want to make clear that I want to provide some background context. To illustrate my support for the bill, I will be incorporating multiple examples from various sources during my speech on such a technically necessary bill.

This bill, as I said, responds to and reflects the changes requested by the Law Society of Upper Canada. The law society regulates lawyers and paralegals in Ontario. Created by an act of the Legislative Assembly in 1797, the Law Society of Upper Canada governs Ontario's lawyers and paralegals in the public interest by ensuring that the people of Ontario are served by lawyers and paralegals who meet the high standards of learning, competence and professional conduct. The law society has a duty to protect the public interest; to maintain and advance the cause of justice and the rule of law; to facilitate access to justice for the people of Ontario; and to act in a timely, open and efficient manner.

The law society regulates, licences and disciplines Ontario's more than 46,000 lawyers and over 5,000 licensed paralegals pursuant to the Law Society Act and the law society's rules, regulations and guidelines. Like many professionals in Ontario, lawyers and paralegals in Ontario are self-governing. This means that lawyers and paralegals oversee their own regulation through the law society in accordance with the Law Society Act and regulations passed by the Ontario government.

The law society is funded through lawyer and paralegal licensing fees. To maintain the privilege of self-governance, the public interest must always be of paramount concern to the law society. The law society offers public services such as:

- the complaints service, which receives and responds to complaints about lawyers and paralegals;

- a comprehensive online directory with lawyer and paralegal contact information;

- the law society referral service, which provides you with the name of a lawyer or a paralegal who will provide free consultation of up to 30 minutes to help determine your rights and options;

- a directory of lawyers who are certified specialists in specific areas of law; and

- the compensation fund, which helps clients who have lost money because of the dishonesty of a lawyer or a paralegal.

To promote access to legal services, the law society supports programs such as Pro Bono Law Ontario, Ontario Justice Education Network and the Law Commission of Ontario. The law society's equity initiatives department seeks to ensure that law, the practice of law and the provision of legal services are reflective of all people in Ontario by actively participating with aboriginal, francophone and equity-seeking groups through consultations, meetings and public education activities.

The magnitude of the Law Society of Upper Canada's contribution to how Ontario and Canada were built is immeasurable. This is a broad overview of who is behind the creation of the law we are debating today. The society

requested the necessary legislation that resulted in Bill 111.

The Modernizing Regulation of the Legal Profession Act, Bill 111, focuses on five key changes. First, the bill proposes to strengthen the hearing and appeals process governing lawyers and paralegals in Ontario. This process addresses allegations of misconduct brought against lawyers and paralegals. Changes in this bill would establish a new internal tribunal that would oversee the law society's current hearing and appeals panels.

Second, this bill would also allow for a more cost-effective and timely process for recovering legal costs from lawyers and paralegals. It proposes to authorize the law society to suspend a professional's licence for failure to pay legal costs relating to a discipline proceeding that has been awarded against that professional.

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Third, Bill 111 would clarify that the law society can receive information that is solicitor-client privileged from any person in a hearing, including a client. Solicitor-client privilege is a person's right to refuse to disclose communications made to or received from his or her legal adviser, such as a lawyer or paralegal. While the current legislation says that the law society can use information received from a lawyer or a paralegal in a hearing and that such information remains protected, it is silent about information received from others at such a hearing, such as, for example, the clients that may have been involved in that particular subject matter.

Fourth, this bill would increase the number of paralegals on the law society's governing body, Convocation, from two to five paralegals. This is obviously a good change.

And last, the fifth legislative proposal found in this bill would provide a housekeeping amendment to specify that paralegals may receive payment for representing an individual in a legal proceeding, which is the current practice, as you might imagine. I can't begin to understand why the government hasn't addressed this issue. The government has let this fester, because the paralegals have been requesting this for six years now.

A paralegal is a legal service provider regulated by the Law Society of Upper Canada who complies with the society's licensing requirements. Paralegals are legal professionals, much like lawyers, but with a smaller scope of practice. Paralegals are there for you because you don't always need a lawyer.

For many years, paralegals helped Ontarians with everyday legal problems: traffic offences, small claims, landlord and tenant matters. Though paralegals still provide most of the same service, today's paralegals are licensed and regulated to be legal.

So what do they do? They provide legal advice. They draft or help draft documents for use in a proceeding. They negotiate in a proceeding on another's behalf. They provide the services of a licensed commissioner.

To be licensed to practise, paralegals must complete an approved college degree, complete a field placement facilitated by their college, pass the law society examina-

tion for paralegals, be of good character, carry professional liability insurance and contribute to a compensation fund. Paralegals work in the Small Claims Court, the Ontario Court of Justice, the Landlord and Tenant Board, administrative tribunals and many matters in the Criminal Code.

Paralegals in Ontario began as a result of a legal process in 1985, and this was the judgment of the Ontario Court of Justice delivered in *Regina v. Lawrie*. The court ruled that a paralegal does not break the law by appearing on behalf of clients in provincial offences, and mainly traffic tickets. In 1986, a higher appeal court supported the decision, and in 1999 the Ontario Court of Appeal issued judgment in *Regina v. Romanowicz*. The court ruled that a paralegal can represent a client in criminal summary conviction matters, subject to some conditions.

In May 2000, the Honourable Peter Cory delivers a report to the Attorney General, setting out a framework for regulating paralegal practice in Ontario. The report contains recommendations on the scope of practice, a governance model for regulation and educational and other requirements. In 2007, the Law Society of Upper Canada becomes responsible for regulating the paralegal profession in Ontario by Bill 14, an amendment to the Access to Justice Act. In October 2007, anyone providing legal services in Ontario as a paralegal must be licensed, and in 2008, the first group of paralegals writes the first licensing examination.

So on May 1, 2007, the Law Society of Upper Canada became responsible for regulating the paralegal profession as a result of amendments to the Law Society Act.

The regulatory framework for the profession was successfully established by the 13-member paralegal standing committee, which is made up of five paralegals and eight members of the law society's governing board, known as Convocation. Five paralegals were elected to the committee in a province-wide election in March 2010. The committee initiated and instituted the Paralegal Rules of Conduct as well as a set of criteria and an application process for paralegals already in practice and for students already studying legal services. The law society issued the first paralegal licences in early 2007 to approved applicants who passed the licensing examination.

Anyone in Ontario providing legal services requires a licence unless the group or individual is not captured by the Law Society Act or is exempt by a law society bylaw. The Law Society Act enables the law society to make exemptions through bylaws.

Legislation passed by the government of Ontario, primarily the Law Society Act and regulations made under the act, authorize the law society to educate and license Ontario's paralegals and regulate their conduct. Law society bylaws and the Paralegal Rules of Conduct, both based in the Law Society Act, set out professional and ethical obligations. Paralegals failing to meet these obligations are subject to the society's complaints and discipline process. Anyone in Ontario providing legal services requires a licence, unless the group or individual is not

captured by the Law Society Act or is exempt by a law society bylaw. The Law Society Act enables the law society to make exemptions through bylaws. The law society will review exemption categories in two years, prior to May 2009.

Groups or individuals not captured by the Law Society Act and who do not require a licence are:

- a person who is acting in the normal course of carrying on a profession or occupation governed by another act of the Legislature or an act of Parliament that regulates specifically the activities of persons engaged in that profession or occupation;

- an employee or officer of a corporation who selects, drafts, completes or revises a document for the use of the corporation or to which the corporation is a party;

- an individual who is acting on his or her own behalf, whether in relation to a document, a proceeding, or otherwise;

- an employee or a volunteer representative of a trade union who is acting on behalf of the union or a member of the union in connection with a grievance, a labour negotiation, an arbitration proceeding or a proceeding before an administrative tribunal;

- a person or a member of a class of persons prescribed by the bylaws in the circumstances provided by the bylaws.

Groups or individuals who do not require a licence are:

- individuals employed by a single employer;
- persons who are not in the business of providing legal services and occasionally provide assistance to a friend or relative for no fee;

- articling students;
- employees of legal clinics funded by Legal Aid Ontario;

- employees of organizations similar to legal clinics that provide free services to low-income clients, provided they meet certain criteria as to their non-profit status and funding;

- aboriginal court workers;
- staff of the Office of the Worker Adviser;
- staff of the Office of the Employer Adviser;
- constituency assistants working in MPP offices;
- law students working in student legal aid services societies, provided they are supervised by a lawyer and covered by the lawyer's insurance;

- Injured Worker Outreach Services;
- Ontario Federation of Labour staff and consultants representing union members in workers' compensation matters under the Occupational Disability Response Team, including their work in representing families of deceased workers;

- trade union representatives acting on behalf of retired persons who were formerly members of the trade union and while providing services to another local of the same union;

- union representatives assisting families of deceased workers at coroners' inquests;

- members of the following listed voluntary standard-setting associations, subject to certain restrictions: the

Human Resources Professionals of Ontario, the Ontario Professional Planners Institute, the Board of Canadian Registered Safety Professionals and the Appraisal Institute of Canada.

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Paralegals who provide legal services to the public must carry professional liability insurance. The minimum requirements are \$1 million per claim, and \$2 million in the aggregate. The coverage must specify the provision of legal services by a paralegal. Individual paralegals must be named as an "insured" on the policy. A minimum, non-optional 90-day extended reporting period is required. The law society should, for the purposes of reporting and cancellation, be added as an "additional insured." Cancellation notice of 60 days is required. And licensees must provide written proof of their compliance with this requirement to carry mandatory insurance before they begin providing legal services, as well as on an annual basis.

Unbelievably, paralegals are still somewhat controversial. The need for this bill is exemplified by the situations outlined in a recent legal profession publication asking the question, Are Paralegals Officers of the Court?

"The recent decision of Justice Fuerst in *R v. Lipa* has the controversy over the standing of paralegals raging again.... The decision relates to whether judicial officers have the discretion over which legal professionals will sit in the courtroom, and the order of cases which will be called.

"In deciding that paralegals can be treated differently within the court system, Justice Fuerst made some interesting comments. She states at para. 18,

"S. 29 of the Law Society Act provides that every person who is licensed to practise law in Ontario as a barrister and solicitor is an officer of every court of record in Ontario. Black's Law Dictionary, 8th ed., defines "officer of the court" as "A person who is charged with upholding the law and administering the judicial system." Licensed paralegals are not included in section 29."

"The section in the act, which was last amended in 2006, states,

"29. Every person who is licensed to practise law in Ontario as a barrister and solicitor is an officer of every court...."

"Normally the *expressio unius maxim* would hold, as Justice Fuerst indicates, that the absence of paralegals from this section means they are not in fact officers of the court. But from at least April 2008, when paralegal licences were first issued in Ontario, paralegals have commonly referred to themselves as such.

"Paul Calarco describes the development of this concept in the 2007 paper presented at the LSUC, NOT IN MY COURT YOU DON'T!! The Right of Audience and the Enforcement of Ethical Conduct,

"In England the origins of the defence bar have been lost in time. Prior to CE 1200 there is no indication of a professional body of people who acted as lawyers. However, under the expansion of the common law rules

in the era of Henry III and the legislation of Edward I, it became clear that people not skilled in the law could not hope to represent any other person.

“As well, as pointed out by Professor Ogilvie, procedure was becoming more technical. In the first part of the 13th century, a group of what we would now call barristers was developing. By the end of the 13th century, it appears that lawyers were well established as part of the King’s courts. They were regarded as officers of the court.”

“An officer of the court has a duty, as part of their profession, to promote justice and the effective operation of the justice system. However, barristers and solicitors are not the only officers of the court described in Canadian legislation.

“The Supreme Court Act refers to several court support staff as officers, all of whom are necessary for the proper functioning of the court. Although the registrar of the Supreme Court and deputy registrar are both described in s. 12 as ‘barristers or advocates,’ there are other officers, such as the sheriff of the county ... who clearly are not. The act enumerates in s. 24 a lengthy list of officers ... ‘All persons who may practise as barristers, advocates, counsel, attorneys, solicitors or proctors in the court are officers of the court.’

“But the Supreme Court is a statutory court. Calarco notes that determining the right of appearance are part of the discretionary powers of courts with inherent jurisdiction.

“Section 800 of the Criminal Code allows an accused to appear on summary conviction personally or by an agent, which can include friends, relatives or interpreters. The responsibility placed on these agents was described by Justice Wein in *R. v. Lemonides*, [1997] ... as follows:

“‘79. All agents should expect to be in a position to satisfy the court that the defendant has been advised of the agent’s status, and it should be clear on the record that the client waives their right to counsel and understands the significance of appearing without a lawyer. All agents should be aware that they will be expected by the court to act as officers of the court, that is in an ethical and competent manner.’

“In other words, when non-licensees act as agents they are also required to act as officers of the court (even if they may not actually be officers ... but note this is the context of being an unlicensed agent). To suggest that a licensee acting in the same capacity in Ontario is not also acting as an officer of the court simply does not follow.

“The *in pari materia* maxim of statutory interpretation, looking at other statutes in Canada, would suggest that an expansive definition is provided to officers of the court throughout our judicial system. The title denotes more of a responsibility to the court system than any proffered right, such as appearing before the bar. Interpretation and use of the term by courts also suggests a broad and liberal meaning.

“Justice Green of the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador referred to the Adult Corrections Act ... to indicate that probation officers had a right to strike,

but were obligated as officers of the court to continue to perform duties lawfully required of them....

“Justice Garson of the Supreme Court of British Columbia considered the admissibility of a court monitor’s report and the compellability of a monitor as an expert witness....

“As an officer of the court, the monitor has been found not to be compellable to give evidence in a proceeding, although the monitor reports to the court on a regular basis. The monitor’s reports have been found to be “not evidence” and hence not generally subject to cross-examination; rather, as an officer of the court, the monitor is to act “lawfully, fairly and honourably.” In Ontario, the court has held that insolvency officers will not generally be subject to cross-examination of their reports, while acknowledging that these court-appointed officers do occasionally make themselves available for examination in the spirit of co-operation and common sense.”

“Similar comments can be found by Justice Farley of the Ontario Superior Court of Justice in the commercial list case of *Bell Canada International Inc., Re*.

“Perhaps the most expansive comments on this topic recently would be by Justice Himel in *Page* (Trustee of), where she considers whether persons who accept appointments as a trustee in bankruptcy or a receiver is an officer of a court, and therefore exempt from jury duty under the *Juries Act*. Justice Himel provides a comprehensive review of case law of various positions and titles which are included as officers of the court, even where they are not explicitly stated as such by legislation. She also refers to *Black’s Law Dictionary* ... cites the *Courts of Justice Act* and *Public Service Act*, and provides several maxims of statutory interpretation.

“Justice Himel concludes trustees in bankruptcy and receivers are officers of a court of justice, but her analysis in *Page* doesn’t resolve the issue entirely. Her interpretation of the *Juries Act* is largely based on the language ... of the act, which states, ‘The following persons are ineligible to serve as jurors....

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“6. Every person engaged in the enforcement of law including, without restricting the generality of the foregoing, sheriffs, wardens of any penitentiary, superintendents, jailers or keepers of prisons, correctional institutions or lockups, sheriff’s officers, police officers, firefighters who are regularly employed by a fire department for the purposes of subsection 41(1) of the *Fire Protection and Prevention Act*, 1997, and officers of a court of justice....”

“This specific wording would prevent any application of *expressio unius* or *eiusdem generis* (both of which can be applied to lists) to the *Juries Act*, and no such expansive language can be found in the *Law Society Act*.

“We could assume the ... interpretation that paralegals in Ontario are officers of the court for the purposes of being excluded from juries, but not for the purposes of actually operating within the court system. But the ... maxim of interpretation may be of assistance in looking elsewhere in the *Law Society Act*....

"The 2006 amendments to the Law Society Act created the paralegal standing committee, which in turn led to the changes that created paralegal licensing in 2007. The paralegal standing committee, created in s. 25.1 of the act, is also responsible for creating the bylaws for paralegal regulation. Subsection 25.1(10) of the act also confers quite a bit of discretionary power to the committee as follows:

"Delegation of powers to committee or referee or both

"(10) Convocation may delegate any of the powers conferred upon it by this section to a committee of Convocation and, whether or not Convocation has made any such delegation, it may appoint any licensee as a referee and delegate to the licensee any of the powers conferred upon it by this section that are not delegated to a committee...."

"The committee was specifically responsible for and instituted the Paralegal Rules of Conduct. Rule 3.04(1) discusses personal interests and how to deal with conflicts of interests which may arise from personal relationships, and states:

"Whether such a relationship may interfere with the paralegal's fiduciary obligations to the client, including his or her ability to exercise independent professional judgment and his or her ability to fulfill obligations owed as an officer of the court and to the administration of justice."

To not recognize "paralegals as officers of the court is to disregard the ethical obligations they owe to the court. Ensuring that paralegals are officers of the court benefits the public interest and the entire judicial system, because it indicates they have a broader duty and professional responsibility to the law," which is good for society in itself.

"Calarco points out the close relationship between the right of appearance as officers of the court and enforcement of ethical conduct. When appearance is denied, the purpose is not necessarily punishment, but rather promotion of the proper administration of justice.

"Without the possibility of discipline, there is little ability by the legal system to address unethical conduct of licensees. Courts also have their own ability to enact discipline against officers of the court."

In Elliott:

"The power of a superior court to cite a person for contempt of court is a very important power, but it is to be used with restraint. It is a serious matter to threaten anyone, let alone an officer of the court, with contempt of court...."

"Although the Law Society Act may not explicitly identify paralegals under s. 29, this should not be taken as an exhaustive list, especially since these amendments occurred before paralegals were officially licensed. As we've seen, there are many other officers of the court within the judicial system.

"This section in the Law Society Act could not have envisioned or foreseen the prospective developments of the paralegal standing committee, and the intent of the

statute could not reasonably be construed as binding their authority to define and regulate the new local profession which was being contemplated in Ontario at the time.

"The same act used by Justice Fuerst also provides broad discretion under s. 25.1 to the paralegal standing committee, which has seen it fit to refer to paralegals as officers of the court in at least one instance. Conferring this status does not necessarily change the decision of Justice Fuerst about the order in which cases are called, which is based in law in the Barristers Act and the inherent jurisdiction of superior courts, but it does have some significance.

"One final thought can be derived from a small footnote in a 2006 decision by Master MacLeod in *Iroquois Falls Power Corp. v. Jacobs Canada Inc.*, where he discusses the role of the court and the law society in governing the conduct of lawyers,

"Whatever historical differences may have existed between the roles of barrister and solicitor no longer apply under Ontario law s. 29 of the Law Society Act provides that every "member" is an officer of every court of record in Ontario and section 28 provides that a person who is qualified and is called to the bar and enrolled and admitted as a solicitor "are members and entitled to practise law in Ontario as barristers and solicitors."

"Similarly, whatever historical differences may have existed between the roles of lawyers and paralegals no longer apply in Ontario as it relates to their status as officers of the court, despite differences in scope of practice. As 'licensees,' paralegals are just as responsible to the law society for their license as lawyers are, and are just as answerable to the court as its officers.

"Ensuring this duty exists for all licensed agents working within our court system for the courts that they work in can only be a good thing for other licensees, the judicial system as a whole, and the public."

When we step back from the legal profession and observe the other professions, too, we notice the trend to divide the scope of labour between two professionals, like a lawyer and a paralegal. It has become more and more common. Some duties of a professional require more intense lengthy schooling; other duties can be handled after a more general study. Thus the ability to allow a practitioner or technician to offer their services is of great benefit to a client.

There are many examples. For instance, if you think of a registered nurse, a registered nurse practitioner, a veterinary or veterinary technician—today the trend, which has been building for certainly the last half century, is not new. On the other hand, to the law society, the institutionalization of paralegals as a profession represents major change. We should not forget the positive contributions made by paralegals in support of the delivery of justice in Ontario. They are monumental.

In part of the 2006 legislation that enables paralegals to operate in Ontario, there is to be a review of the legislation. There are to be two reports produced: one completed by the law society and one completed by the Ministry of the Attorney General. As far as I can find out,

the ministry has not complied with the requirement of the legislation to do a five-year review of how regulation of paralegals by the law society is going. Are the results of the new legislation positive? I'd like to know, but apparently we don't have the report to be provided by the Ministry of the Attorney General.

So today we have only the report provided by the law society itself. I think it certainly behooves this government to comply with the intent of the legislation. I think it's important for us.

In 2012, in a report by David Morris for the society: "In the interest of striking some measure of balance between enhancing public access to justice and ensuring protection for those receiving legal aid from non-lawyers, on May 1, 2007, persons providing paralegal services in Ontario joined the province's lawyers under regulation of the Law Society of Upper Canada.

"Amendments to the Law Society Act that introduced paralegal regulation included the requirement that two reviews be conducted following its fifth anniversary, one by the law society and the other by ... the Attorney General.... Each review was to consider the manner in which paralegals were regulated during the first five years, and the effect of regulation on paralegals and on members of the public."

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The law society delivered its report on June 28, 2012, on its findings of the introduction of their regulation. I think it's really important to have this kind of obligation: to make sure it's fulfilling what its objectives were. As a result of the law society's report, it was able to indicate that satisfaction levels are generally high among members of the public. "The law society acknowledges that, despite its efforts to date, awareness in the general, non-consuming public has not kept pace with changes in the legal services market. In fact, in a submission to this review, a veteran lawyer described his challenges in determining the permissible scope of paralegal practice."

In September 2012, there were 4,000 active paralegal licensees in the province. Remarkably, all of the licences issued have been issued since January 2011.

As I close off, I want to come back to the urgency that has been made clear to us by the law society. The opportunity to be able to increase paralegal representation in the Convocation is time-sensitive. As we have pointed out on this side of the House, it is the opportunity only provided by the government House leader as to when things are debated, and we just want to make clear to all those who are affected that it is in the power of the government House leader to call a bill and allow for debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you to the member for adding her voice to the debate and sharing her concerns. It's important to do so.

I want to make one thing clear. While the Attorney General indicated that this is a non-partisan bill and something we should all support—that's fair—I have to

say, though, that the government's priorities are questionable, when we've known about this bill and known about this concern for a significant time. The law society has done their job to let us know about the necessity and the requirement to bring this bill forward in a timely manner, but the government has not prioritized this bill. In terms of the bills they're bringing forward, it's not clear what their goals are. They've quickly rammed through bills like the EllisDon bill, but they're taking their time when it comes to something that's as important as this. I question this government's sincerity when it comes to whether or not they want to bring this bill forward when they had ample opportunity.

The government House leader has full opportunity and authority to choose the bills that are going to come forward and when they come forward. So I ask this government again, why not prioritize the appropriate bills? I asked the same thing when it came to Bill 83, a bill to protect public participation, which is essential for our democracy. This bill is also a priority bill. It doesn't cost the government anything and it's something we need to do to modernize the profession and to assist the law society in doing their job, so why wasn't this bill brought forward earlier? Why is it being brought when we only have left now six or seven sitting days in the House before the year ends? That shows this government's lack of seriousness when it comes to bringing this bill forward and making sure it gets passed in a timely manner. I again ask the government to re-evaluate their priorities.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, let's focus everybody on what the bill is intended to do. Bill 111 will amend the Law Society Act and the Solicitors Act to modernize the regulation of the legal profession. The proposed legislative amendments have been requested by the Law Society of Upper Canada and have been made public in their Convocation, which is the governing body of the law society, or in its mandated five-year review of the paralegal profession.

The law society is a self-regulating body. It regulates the lawyers and paralegals in the public interest. The law society's governing body is composed of 40 elected lawyers, two elected paralegals and eight laypeople who are non-legal, who are public appointees. These individuals are called benchers. There are approximately 44,000 lawyers and 4,200 paralegals who are governed by the law society.

In 2007, the Access to Justice Act came into force. It prescribed the regulation of paralegals. The legislation mandated two five-year reviews of paralegal regulation: one review to be completed by the law society, and a second review to be completed by a non-lawyer, non-paralegal appointee of the Attorney General.

The proposed amendment to increase the number of paralegal benchers is in fact time-sensitive, and it needs to be in effect by December 31, 2013, to be in place in advance of the next four-year election cycle that commences in March 2014. So we are depending upon the

co-operation of our opponents opposite in the Progressive Conservative and the NDP caucuses to make sure this thing, which is requested by the law society, gets passed before Christmas. That's all they've asked us to do: make their profession better by getting this bill passed before Christmas.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I very much enjoyed listening to my seatmate, the member from York-Simcoe and the new Attorney General critic for the Progressive Conservative caucus. I think she did an excellent job laying out not only the history of the law society but, quite frankly, the transition that has occurred as we incorporate paralegals into our legal profession. Clearly, this is a bill that would endorse that and modernize it. Considering it is a relatively dry legal process bill, I thought she did an excellent job laying out the value of what it was and why we needed it. Moving forward, I look forward to hearing further discussion on Bill 111.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to say that we're not opposed to what this bill is trying to do. It's pretty straightforward and, as such, it's not a bill that we want to spend a lot of time on, but there needs to be at least some time for our critic to be able to say what our caucus's views are on this particular bill.

But I've got to say, and it's been said by a few people in the House, as the New Democratic House leader, that normally what happens when a government wants particular bills to pass is, they come to us in the fall or they come to us in the early spring and they say, "Here are the things that we would like to have passed by a certain date." And then the government and the opposition House leaders are able to figure out, all right, what do we feel strongly about, what are we prepared to let go, and what's going to be the trade-off? That's how the Legislature works. Every legislative body in the world is about everybody putting a little bit of water into their wine, government getting some things—maybe not as much as they want—and the opposition getting some stuff in return.

Where was the government in setting out its priorities back in the early fall? What I saw them do was make a deal with the Conservatives on time allocation to pass a number of private members' bills, and then, in exchange, they got some bills that we could all agree to. Why was this bill not put in that agreement? That's the first question I have. Did the government, all of a sudden, say, "No, this is not something we're prepared to put forward?" Was it the Conservatives who didn't want to allow it to go forward? I'm not sure. But at the very least, if it wasn't part of that time allocation motion that they put in place with the Conservatives, why is it that they didn't bring it to House leaders a little bit earlier?

Instead, here we are with less than two weeks left in the fall sitting, and the government comes to us and says, "Oh, my God, the end of this session is coming. Oh, we have to pass all this legislation"—and somehow or other

we're responsible for that? I'm sorry. The government has a responsibility to order how this House is going to deal with business, and when the government doesn't set forward clearly what it wants as priorities, they can't, all of a sudden, accuse the opposition of being the ones to hold it up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments, and we return to the member for York-Simcoe for her reply.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Thank you very much to the members who spoke: Bramalea-Gore-Malton, Mississauga-Streetsville, Dufferin-Caledon and Timmins-James Bay.

First of all, I want to echo the comments of several of the people in referencing the priority that this government had and where it put it in the order of bills to be debated.

Secondly, the notion that we in any way have held this up—quite the opposite. I've had informal comments with the Attorney General, and we both recognize that it's the House leader's responsibility to be able to put the bills forward.

I'm surprised because of the fact that you would think that the government, when this has all-party agreement and when we are in a minority government, would look at the bills in the way that the member for Timmins-James Bay said—come together with a group of bills—and that this government in its minority situation would like to come forward with some quick wins. That could have been done back in October. Now we're looking at a very short time frame. If this bill was to go to committee—many of the committees are very busy. It's something that they control entirely, and the fact that, as everyone has said around the table here, it's a non-partisan bill—yes, but you're the managers.

The member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton suggested you needed to re-evaluate your priorities. I couldn't agree more. This is an easy win for you, and you have made it difficult for them.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): This House stands in recess.

The House recessed from 1012 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to introduce the family of page William Randall from Don Valley West: his mother, Sue Gray; father, Steve Randall; sister Becca Randall; grandmother Betty Randall; and grandfather Joe Owen Gray. I think they're all here. Welcome.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It's a pleasure to introduce Brian Goodman to the Legislature today. Brian is the director of government relations and policy for the Canadian Media Production Association. Welcome.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm really excited today to be able to introduce to the Legislature five incredible young people. These five young people gave up their jobs—their lives were all affected by men's health issues—and they

cycled for the Movember campaign, the Moustache Ride Across Canada, from Vancouver to Toronto. They raised \$121,000 for prostate cancer, as I said, giving up their jobs, averaging about 130 kilometres a day from Vancouver to Toronto in what is inclement weather, as I'm sure all people can appreciate.

First, Jordan Gildersleeve, Ben Frisby and Kevin Shaw: the three cyclists. I'd like them to stand. They're sitting in the east gallery, along with their driver, Erin Quinn—all from Vancouver. The fifth person on the tour was Robert Bickford. Robert is formerly from Thunder Bay—he was the videographer on the trip—now residing in Toronto. I want to thank them all very much for what they did.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It's great to stand up here and introduce a former member from the great riding of Northumberland—Quinte West: Mr. Lou Rinaldi is here in the east gallery. Thank you very much, Lou, for coming to Queen's Park today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want to thank the member for stealing my thunder. I appreciate it.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: It is my pleasure to introduce Dr. Satish Verma, director of youth welfare from Punjabi University in Patiala, India, who is here to attend the World Punjabi Conference, and my husband, Dr. Jaswant Singh Mangat. They are in the east members' gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Rob Leone: It's with great honour that I welcome to this world Lincoln Lloyd Harris, the newest tiny Tory born to the member for Kitchener—Conestoga. I want to congratulate him and his wife, Sarah, as well as brothers Murphy and Brayden.

Mr. Speaker, that's three tiny Tories born to PC MPPs this year, and we're proud to have them.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think we've hit a new level for heckling during introductions. I think that's good.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's counting your chickens as they're hatched.

The member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is a great pleasure for me to introduce Léo Therrien, le directeur général de la Maison Vale Hospice, qui est ici en l'honneur de soins palliatifs. Ça m'a fait bien plaisir de le rencontrer, M. Léo Therrien.

Mr. Rick Bartolucci: For the English translation of that, we'd like to welcome Léo Therrien, who is with the Ontario hospice association. Léo runs Maison Vale Hospice in Sudbury. He does a remarkable job for those dealing with end-of-life issues, and we congratulate him for his great work and the association's great work across the province of Ontario.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I'm honoured to welcome the parents of page captain Marina St. Marseille. Her parents, John and Margaret St. Marseille, are in the gallery. They're from Cornwall. John works for the city of Cornwall. I'm just happy to have them around today.

Hon. Jeff Leal: It's a great pleasure for me to introduce some guests in the members' east gallery today. I'll

start with the former member for Northumberland—Quinte West, Lou Rinaldi, and Victoria Parker and Chelsie Weir, in the members' east gallery.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you for stealing my thunder.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I need to correct my record, because I introduced people incorrectly. The grandmother of William Randall is actually Betty Gray, who is here, and Becca and Emma Randall, his sisters, are both here.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm delighted to introduce Susan Kawa from Silver Creek Pre-School in Etobicoke, and Janet MacDougall from Yes I Can! nursery school in North York. They are both here for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Joining us today—and it gives me great pleasure to introduce them—is a delegation from Figueira da Foz, a city in Portugal, led by the mayor of Figueira da Foz, João Ataíde, and his wife, Maria Silvia Vaz Serra Ataíde. Also joining them are Tiago Castelo Branco, chief of staff from the city of Figueira da Foz, and Bárbara Sofia Ferreira, director of tourism from Figueira da Foz—and hosted by Maria Oliveira from Able Translations. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Remarks in Portuguese.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As is the custom—and having been stepped on by two members—it's my pleasure to introduce, from the 38th Parliament and the 39th Parliament, from Northumberland—Quinte West, Mr. Lou Rinaldi. Welcome.

YOUTH ARTS PROGRAM

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do want to draw the attention of all of the members to the Legislative Assembly's youth arts program, a program put on by PPRP—and I thank them for their wonderful work—being showcased here in the building.

This program celebrates the incredible artistic talents of our young Ontarians aged 14 to 18. Works of art will be on display on the main floor rotunda leading into both the hallways and to the library, and works of art will also be on display on the fourth floor, from now until March 2014.

I hope you will take some time to view these amazing exhibits. I think you will be impressed, very impressed, with the high calibre of the works on display. I thank all the schools, the teachers, and especially the students for sharing their wonderful art with us. Wonderful work.

Last night, I was able to share with some of the artists who were here for Lights Across Canada. Some of their principals and teachers were here, and they were very, very thankful that we're displaying Ontario artists at a young age. I thank all of you for participating and sharing.

Watch for some of the artwork within your own ridings, and I would recommend and ask that you maybe make contact.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Tim Hudak: Speaker, my question to the Premier, a very simple question of basic economics: Does the Premier believe that there is a direct causal relationship between rapidly increasing energy prices in Ontario and the hollowing out of our manufacturing sector, the 324,000 lost manufacturing jobs?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What I know is that there are companies that are coming to Ontario, Mr. Speaker. There are jobs being created in Ontario.

1040

The reality is that our energy prices are competitive with our neighbouring jurisdictions, and we've made sure that that is the case. We've put in place programs to deal with particular sectors, like northern industrial.

As I said, we believe that the plan that we have in place, which is investing in people and in infrastructure that's needed by communities, and creating that business environment that is competitive, is working, which is why businesses are coming to the province.

Is there more that needs to be done? Absolutely, and we are going to continue to play to our strengths and put those conditions in place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: It's almost like the Premier is inferring that higher energy prices are attracting jobs in the province of Ontario. It's entirely bizarre. That fails a basic test of economics. Premier, I can't believe that you actually believe that. I can't believe that you've been so insulated from what's happening in towns across our province and cities. I can't believe you're that out of touch.

When you double hydro rates in the province of Ontario, when Ontario has gone from having the most competitive hydro rates to among the most expensive for business in the province, there's a cost for that. Sadly, the cost is that the bills are going up by about \$500 for an average family in our province, and they're driving manufacturing jobs out of the province of Ontario.

So let me ask a very simple question of the Premier, again, because I think she gave me the opposite answer of what's a basic rule of economics: Does the Premier believe there is a direct causal relationship between skyrocketing hydro rates and the hollowing out of our middle class and the loss of manufacturing jobs in Ontario. Yes or no?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would reply to the Leader of the Opposition: Does he believe, simplistically, that there is only one condition that creates opportunity for business? Does the Leader of the Opposition believe that it was not necessary to invest in transmission, to invest in the upgrade of our grid, to invest in generating

capacity? The fact is, when we came into office there was not a stable supply of electricity in this province; there was not a predictability that businesses could count on. So we made those investments.

The reality is that there's a full range of conditions that need to be in place, including making sure people have the right skills so that they can fill the jobs that are necessary, making sure that there are roads and bridges and transit in place, that infrastructure that's so necessary. Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Leader of the Opposition, does he believe that those things are important? Because those are the things that we have been putting in place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I believe one thing is most important above all else, and that's the creation of good, steady jobs that actually pay an income you can survive on and that grow our economy.

Look, you asked me, do I think energy is the only cause? Well, no. It's the increase in taxes in the province of Ontario. It's the growing, growing red tape. It's the record deficits and record debt in our province. It's the giveaways to the public sector unions. It's a government that has no clue about economics.

Is there one rule for this? No, there are plenty, Premier. I can go on and on if you want me to. The bottom line, though, is when you're in a hole, you stop digging. Your rule is, you dig a little slower and get the hole deeper.

Why in the world do you want to continue with Dalton McGuinty's failed green energy subsidies, putting wind turbines across the province like giant pins on a pin-cushion? It's economic madness. It's costing us jobs. Why in the world are you continuing down Dalton McGuinty's failed path that's costing us jobs?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, let's hear from some other voices, like Ian Howcroft, Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters: "The LTEP review responds to a key priority for CME by providing greater clarity and certainty for manufacturers with respect to electricity rates going forward. CME also supports new initiatives to enable manufacturers to better manage their energy and the associated costs. Importantly, LTEP will reduce overall system costs, which ultimately translates into more competitive forward rates for businesses."

Mr. Speaker, there are some other voices that I will bring later on in subsequent questions.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Tim Hudak: Again, I do hope the Premier responds to these questions. Premier, I'm going to be very plain about this. You can't substitute in Bob Chiarelli

when you're before the justice committee today to answer questions by Lisa MacLeod—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

Two things. First, I need it directed to the person. You just carried on a conversation. Direct your new question. And we use only titles and we only use ridings, please. Thank you.

Mr. Tim Hudak: It's a question to the Premier, Speaker.

Premier, with respect, you can't substitute in the energy minister when you're before the justice committee today to answer basic questions about why you misled the assembly and misled MPPs about what you knew about the gas plant scandal and when you knew it. No substitutions; no time-outs. This afternoon you're going to have to tell the truth.

Let me ask you a basic question here too; a very basic question. Yesterday in the Legislature, you said that Ontario's energy rates for business were lower than bordering states and provinces. Premier, you know that is not a fact. Can you please tell me the source where Ontario's energy bills are lower for business than competing states and provinces?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've been clear that we are competitive with neighbouring jurisdictions. I also acknowledge that where there is inexpensive hydro, in Quebec and Manitoba, those costs are less; I've been clear about that.

The Leader of the Opposition is part of a party that neglected the electricity system. When we came into office, we needed to make those investments. We have made those investments. What the Leader of the Opposition would like to do now, what stands for a plan from his side, is that he wants to invest in new nuclear that has been determined is not necessary. That \$15-billion cost that is not necessary—he would like to go forward and make those investments.

Our contention is that there are a number of conditions that need to be in place in order for business to thrive: investment in people, infrastructure and a business climate. That's what—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: The Premier's reliance on 10-year-old briefing notes—blow the dust off them—when the biggest issue of our times, a loss of jobs in our province, is truly frightening. I want to say to you, Premier, the shaky grip of this government on basic economics—the fact that higher hydro prices cost us jobs—is truly frightening when we consider that that's going to cause more damage to the province of Ontario. I have no understanding of why you think the right decision, when we're hemorrhaging jobs—3,000 manufacturing jobs a month, Premier, under your leadership alone—why you would double down on Dalton McGuinty's failed policies of subsidizing wind and solar.

There is a business I visited recently. They can create jobs in Ontario or the state of Texas. They have plants in both places. They're an Ontario company. They're dedicated to the province, but they say, "Tim, when hydro rates are 70% cheaper in Texas for business than the province of Ontario, where are you going to put the jobs?"

Premier, how can you answer that question when your very policies are driving hydro rates through the roof and costing us jobs?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I know that previously, in some kind of a white paper, the Leader of the Opposition said that he was going to eliminate renewables from the system and use that to subsidize the industrial rates. Wind and solar represent roughly less than 4% of the total generation. His numbers don't add up. He couldn't come close to subsidizing—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. The member from Chatham-Kent-Essex will come to order, the member from Huron-Bruce will come to order and the member from Prince Edward-Hastings will come to order.

Carry on.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Again, his numbers don't add up. He's going to get rid of them out of the energy mix and he's going to use the money saved to subsidize industrial prices. We've done the calculations, we've looked at it, and it doesn't work; it doesn't add up. It's like your budget and everything else you're talking about: The numbers just don't add up.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I want to, Premier, directly to you, just express my sincere disappointment that on basic questions around the biggest issue in our province—jobs and the economy—you shove them off and hand them off to a minister. I worry that it's either weak leadership or you don't understand the basic economics that are at stake here. You have made deliberate decisions over 10 years to drive up our hydro rates. Our hydro rates have more than doubled.

What we saw yesterday was nothing more than a short-term plan for Liberal re-election interests. The problem is, it has a long-term, lasting impact on our competitiveness and jobs for families across Ontario. Your plan has been an abject failure. Hydro rates are going through the roof. It's costing us jobs on a daily basis. You're eroding the middle class. You're taking away hope from those who actually want to work in the province of Ontario and create jobs.

We have a plan to make energy affordable, to lower taxes, to cut the red tape, to make Ontario rise again, to make us a beacon for investment and job creation. If you can't handle this job, step aside—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

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Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated please. Thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The same graphs that he was looking at in the long-term energy plan will disclose the following: For an industrial consumer with a demand of five megawatts per month, our 2010 plan had projected that in 2014, next year, they would be paying \$109 per megawatt hour. Under this plan, and the graphs that are in the plan, the 2013 long-term energy plan projects that would only be \$87 per megawatt hour. This is an unbelievable improvement for the industrial sector.

He is only reading part of the plan; he's not reading the whole plan. He should be properly briefed himself.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question. The leader of the third party.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want to give the member an opportunity to put her question properly. Order, please.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The question is to the Premier. Ontario families and businesses are already paying the highest electricity rates in Canada, and yesterday the government confirmed their plan to send them even higher. Ontarians expect or at least hope that the people that they elect to represent them will actually protect their interests when it comes to electricity rates. As a member of cabinet, the Premier signed off on a plan that added millions to the government's private power deal in Oakville. Why did she do that, Speaker?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As the leader of the third party knows, I have agreed to appear before the committee again today to answer the questions that will be asked of me and to repeat the information that I have given to this House and to the committee previously. I'm happy to continue to answer those questions, Mr. Speaker.

But what the leader of the third party also knows is that we have put a plan for energy in place—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The answer is being provided by your Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The long-term energy plan was just released yesterday. I have no idea what the plan of the third party is. They do not agree with us on green energy; they don't agree with us on nuclear refurbishment. They don't agree on any of the investments that we have made. So I don't know what their plan is, but what I do know is that we have to have a long-term, stable plan. That's what we have; we've put that in place. That will give some predictability to industry and residents in the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The auditor made it clear that the agreement the Premier signed was part of a political strategy to ensure that the public didn't hear about the cancellation as the province was heading into an election.

In her testimony at hearings into the gas plant scandal, the Premier claimed that she simply signed off on a plan that was put in front of her and didn't ask any questions as to how it might affect the people stuck with the bill. Is that the Premier's defence for this decision, that she was just being a team player for the Liberal campaign?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, we've been over this ground many times, and I will go over it again in answer to questions in the committee this afternoon. But the leader of the third party knows that there was a decision that was made to cancel and relocate gas plants. That was a decision that was agreed, by all the parties, was the right thing to do.

I was part of the cabinet that made that decision. There was a negotiation process that was being engaged, and I did not have the details of what was going to happen at that table. So I've been over that ground. I will go over it again at committee, Mr. Speaker, but I think the leader of the third party knows that the decision that was made is one that was supported by everyone.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, one thing I think the Premier needs to know is that the people of Ontario know that just because the Liberals say it doesn't mean it's true.

As the Liberal campaign co-chair in the 2011 election campaign, the Premier heard about her party's commitment to cancel a gas plant in Mississauga, and, given her role in the Oakville negotiations, she must have been pretty aware that this too would hit ratepayers hard. Did she place any calls or raise any concerns with the campaign team or did she decide once again to make her priority helping the Liberal campaign?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member from Toronto—Danforth, a member of this leader's caucus, understands, and what he said on April 11 was, "I don't see it as a smoking gun. We knew that the cabinet was approving this process. So this does not surprise me."

Mr. Speaker, it was part of a process. It's a process that I have outlined many times and will no doubt have a chance to outline again this afternoon at committee. The reality is that I have taken responsibility. I have said that there were decisions made that should have been made in a better way. What is very important is that we have in place a process that will mean that this will not happen again, that the community will be engaged in a different way so that this kind of decision will not be made again. The leader of the third party knows that I've taken responsibility for that.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. People hear the Premier talking about doing

things differently, but all they see are the same cynical approaches and tired ideas that got us where we are. People feel like they've been abandoned, Speaker.

Karen wrote us to say this: "My last hydro bill I had to ask my daughter to cover for me ... and she could barely help as she has major student loans to pay back. I am tired of working and not getting ahead.... When will this end?" What does the Premier have to say to women like Karen, who expect their Premier to have their backs when it comes to their electricity bills?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I sympathize with people who are struggling, Mr. Speaker. It's why we have put a number of supports in place, whether it's a tuition rebate, whether it's support for young families with children—

Hon. Charles Sousa: Child care benefit.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —the Ontario Child Benefit, whether it's a reduction on the electricity bills, the clean energy benefit. We have put those in place.

But, Mr. Speaker, Karen and all of the residents of Ontario need to have a reliable energy source. They need to know that when they go to turn the lights on, the lights are going to come on. In order for that to be the case, the government must have a plan. The leader of the third party does not have a plan. No one knows how she would keep the lights on in this province, Mr. Speaker. Everyone knows that we have a predictable and stable plan. That plan was released yesterday, and I would have thought that she would have supported the conservation—at least—aspect of that, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Premier's sympathy is not going to help Karen pay her hydro bill.

The scandal with the gas plants, unfortunately, is not an isolated—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Order.

Leader.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The scandal with the gas plants is not an isolated incident, unfortunately. To many people, it has become a symbol of the government's absolute indifference to people struggling to make ends meet and to hold onto good jobs.

Wayne works with a large manufacturer, and he writes, "Our jobs may be on the line due to rising hydro rates. To have a middle class you must have manufacturing; that's a fact the world over. Maybe those in charge do not want a middle class...." What does the Premier have to say to Wayne and thousands like him who think the government's hydro policy may cost them their jobs?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would want to make sure that people who are concerned about industrial rates understand that we have put programs in place because we acknowledge that there are concerns.

The industrial electricity incentive: As of 2013, eligible companies qualify for electricity rates that are

among the lowest in North America, in exchange for creating new jobs. So we've made that connection. The industrial conservation initiative helps large consumers save on costs by incenting them to shift their hours of use. The Northern Industrial Electricity Rate Program puts in place a reduction for northern industrial consumers. It reduces their costs by 25%.

So it's very important that people understand that we do acknowledge that there are concerns in the industrial sector. The Minister of Energy has just noted some quotes from yesterday that manufacturers and industries understand that predictability is important and that we have these programs in place. So I would hope that they understand that that's the case, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.
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Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, people worried about keeping good jobs and making ends meet feel that this government simply doesn't care about their challenges, and the mess in the electricity system proves it. People are tired of paying the price for the government that just doesn't seem to get it. Instead of offering real change, we see the government scrambling to hide the damage that they've done.

Does the Premier have anything to offer people who are feeling the squeeze like never before, or does she agree with her minister that the mess this government has made in our electricity system is simply a fact of life?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Actually, what we have done since we came into office is we've been cleaning up the mess that was left by the previous two governments.

We have made investments that were necessary. We have made sure that the grid has been upgraded. We're dealing with communities that need support, that need energy, and we're working on building that infrastructure so that they will have the energy supply that's necessary.

We recognize that cleaning the air is not a priority for either of the opposition parties, which is surprising, actually, because I would have thought that green energy, at least for the NDP, would have been a priority. Apparently, it's not.

Creating jobs in the green energy sector, cleaning up the air, making sure we have a stable energy supply: Those are our priorities, and we've been working on that, cleaning up the mess that was left by the previous two governments.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

New question.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is also to the Premier. Your energy plan will cost Ontario families anywhere between 30% to 50% more. That is, on average, \$400 per family. Your energy policy is also going to lower the standard of living in Ontario. As

Ontario families decide they need to lower their energy bills, they're going to have to shut off the lights, shut off the heat, shut off their appliances.

I think you owe it to the constituents across this province to tell them exactly how much of this rate increase is due to your catastrophic energy policy as well as to those cancelled gas plants. We'd really like to know, because the only party with a plan, at the present moment, to make those more affordable is our party, under PC leader Tim Hudak.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The member should know by now that the costs of relocating those gas plants are not even in the system yet. It will be three or four years before they're in, and by that time, Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Actually, start the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We've taken \$20 billion out of the cost base, including \$15 billion for new nuclear. That is going to push rates down as we move forward. The—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —will be an average of 2.8%.

Mr. Speaker, again, they look at the graphs in the plan and they will pick out a couple of years where there is excessive pressure on prices. They will not look at the overall plan that will show that the reduction over 20 years is 2.8% per year.

Mr. Speaker, there's no way to avoid electricity cost increases. Neither leader on the other side has given a commitment to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm astonished. His short-term energy plan, in the long run, is going to cost at least \$1 billion more on the rate base. What else are they hiding from the public from this long-term energy plan? That actually confirms our suspicion that you released that report yesterday solely to distract the public from the Premier attending the gas plant hearings today.

Speaker, I want to go back to this jobs issue. It's not only families and seniors who are suffering as a result of these rate hikes. We have lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs across the province. She's making Bob Rae blush by sending so many jobs south.

We are now the only jurisdiction in the world that relies on losing jobs as a conservation plan. We have received letters from a number of organizations, including businesses, who tell us that the average industrial electricity price in Ontario is double the average of Manitoba, Quebec and Michigan. It's not just homeowners who are

suffering; it is the business community. Why are you sending our jobs south?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated please. Be seated please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Oxford, come to order. The Minister of the Environment, come to order. The member from Nepean—Carleton, come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Eglinton—Lawrence, come to order. Thank you.

Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'll be happy to speak for the Minister of Finance on jobs, Mr. Speaker. The minister and the Premier have stood up on a regular basis and indicated that throughout the recession period and coming—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound will come to order. That's the second time.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Durham, come to order.

Finish, please.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —created more than 460,000 net new jobs coming out of the recession, between the recession and now—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, come to order.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —and I will say that 31,000 of those jobs are in the clean energy sector—

Interjections.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —in wind, solar and biomass. There is a huge industry here in Ontario, which we have created. Part of those 460,000 jobs is coming right out of the energy sector.

They need to look the people in the eye who are creating those jobs, creating those new companies, and tell them that they are going to make it stop, Mr. Speaker.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Premier. The Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters have said that electricity costs can be a “deal breaker,” but the energy minister has called skyrocketing costs “a fact of life.”

Ten years of Liberal government has put the unemployment rate in Ontario higher than the national average. It's time to get our hydro bills under control so that we can grow and create jobs. Why is the Liberal government more interested in their political fortunes than getting hydro rates under control so we can create jobs?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm happy to talk about jobs in this province. I want to talk about Roger Martin's prosperity task force. His report was released last week. This is a quotation from their report: "Few comparable regions outside of North America have an economy that is as competitive and prosperous as Ontario's.... Ontario's GDP per capita is higher than the median of the 12 international peer regions identified by the task force, thanks in part to a highly skilled workforce, stable economy and diverse mix of productive industries." He goes on to say, "The Ontario government's 2013 fall economic statement is commendable for its focus on infrastructure, possible tax reforms and investments in human capital." He says that "Ontario's tax system is now one of the most business-friendly in the OECD."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Business leaders in Niagara have identified lower hydro rates as being one of their top priorities when it comes to attracting manufacturing investment and creating jobs. Alternatively, high hydro prices are the biggest issue facing new development and expansion, as Mayor Bradley of Sarnia has said about Nova Chemicals' expansion plans.

Companies that are already seeing costs as deal breakers can expect a 40% increase over the next five years. Is the Premier going to get hydro rates under control so that businesses can grow and create jobs, or is high unemployment, just like skyrocketing hydro costs, just another Liberal fact of life?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I want to say that, of course, electricity prices are a factor in business decisions and investment decisions in this province. But I think it's important that all of us pause for a moment and recognize just—the opposition parties, I think, are getting close to a line, because if investors from other countries are looking at us today and at this moment, and they hear how the official opposition is talking down manufacturing and saying, "Don't come here because it's too expensive," and now we have this party as well, talking down our manufacturers and the hard efforts of our employers and the importance of investing here—I think we all have a responsibility.

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Mr. Speaker, 40% of the manufacturing in this country is located here in this province. Nearly a million people are employed in this sector. We work hard for them every day. We've created nearly 500,000 jobs since the bottom of the recession. We've created the eastern economic development fund and the southwestern Ontario.

We're going to continue to work hard for our manufacturers and for all of our employers and businesses around the province.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Speaker, yesterday the minister introduced On-

tario's new long-term energy plan. The plan set out the province's priorities and initiatives for meeting the energy needs of Ontarians for the next 20 years.

We all know the energy policy has been a topic of discussion in Ontario these days, and for good reasons. It is an issue that affects every Ontarian directly. In my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt, I frequently hear concerns from the constituents, wondering how they can lower their electricity bills. Given that electricity is an important issue for Ontarians, the release of this plan is very timely.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can he please tell the House what are some of the highlights from the new long-term energy plan?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member from Scarborough—Agincourt for her question. The new plan is a balanced approach to meeting energy needs today and for generations to come.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew will come to order.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The plan is based on what we heard from First Nations and Métis communities, stakeholders, municipalities and consumers from across Ontario.

This plan is built around five key principles: cost effectiveness, reliability, clean energy, community engagement and putting conservation first.

The member's constituents will be happy to know that we have taken several very significant steps to reduce the rate of increases to their hydro bills. Compared to the previous long-term energy plan, an average consumer can expect to pay about \$520 less over the next five years, and about \$3,800 less to 2030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Minister, for that response. It is certainly a significant amount of real savings for families and small businesses.

One element of the new plan that I find particularly interesting is the introduction of the new financing tools for home energy renovations. I know that conservation is the best way for families to lower their energy bills. I also understand that the new long-term energy plan includes a commitment to foster a culture of conservation in Ontario by encouraging and empowering consumers to reduce their consumption.

Minister, you also spoke about energy literacy as one way that we can educate and empower consumers to make choices about how reduce their consumption. It sounds like the on-bill financing has the potential to be another powerful tool for consumers to look at for lowering their energy bills.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can he please inform the House about the details on the on-bill financing and clarify how it might reduce the costs for consumers using this program?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: On-bill financing for home energy retrofits is another step towards empowering consumers to control their electricity consumption. Specific-

ally, it helps consumers finance energy-efficient projects in their home and business, which will save them money in the long run.

Similar programs in neighbouring jurisdictions like Manitoba and New York have been very successful in allowing people to make upgrades to their homes with no upfront costs and a convenient, low-interest repayment model.

Over the long run, savings on energy bills can surpass the cost of the renovations, achieving a net savings for consumers while helping to protect the environment and lower system costs to the province.

On-bill financing is one more way the new long-term energy plan is empowering consumers to lower their energy bills.

CHRIS MAZZA

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Health explained why she could claim ignorance about the latest revelations about Chris Mazza's multi-million dollar salaries. She confirmed that she received the forensic audit report that was conducted by the government in December 2011, which gave the details of those salaries, but she confirmed for us that neither she nor her deputy bothered to even open the envelope. It was sent directly to the OPP, she said.

Speaker, this was a forensic audit of the operations and financial dealings of an organization embroiled in scandal under her watch, and this minister tells us that she didn't even bother to open the envelope. I ask the Premier, after displaying such gross incompetency, why is this minister still in your cabinet?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Because she's an excellent health minister and she is transforming the health care system so it will be sustainable for generations to come. That's why she's still in office.

I know that the Minister of Health is going to want to speak to the specifics of this question in the supplementary but I want the member opposite to remember that this is the Minister of Health who ordered the forensic audit in the first place. This is the Minister of Health who, based on the findings of the report, brought in the OPP to investigate. This Minister of Health has made sure that her reactions to the situation were immediate and appropriate. I know that the member opposite actually knows that. He also knows that if we don't transform the health care system in the ways that the minister is doing it, it will not be sustainable over time. That's why she is doing the job and doing it in a very good way.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: The best way to transform the health care system is to get rid of this minister.

There are two issues here: One is that the minister ordered a forensic audit and then didn't bother to look at

it to see exactly what the details were. The second is that the minister was in contempt of Parliament because she knows full well that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts asked for every piece of correspondence and information that related to the financials of Ornge and especially that all of the payments made to Mazza be tabled with that committee. She had the information. She may not have looked at it but she knew it was there. The committee on public accounts was denied that information.

I say this to the Premier: Her excellent Minister of Health has failed the people of this province. She held the committee in contempt. I ask her once again, why does she continue to hold the portfolio that she does? She's not worthy of the title.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think the member opposite needs to do his homework because if he did his homework, he would know that a government member, the member from Guelph, asked Ornge at committee for all payments made to Dr. Mazza from all Ornge entities. That information was tabled with the committee a year ago. It was publicly released in January of this year—all but that personal information that could not be released. That information has been at committee for a year. To suggest that we are hiding anything is absolutely bogus, when it is absolutely true it was tabled and released publicly.

CHRIS MAZZA

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The Minister of Health ordered a forensic audit of Ornge when she realized that there were some serious problems going on. But when the audit team delivered their findings, the minister did not bother to read the findings.

At the same time, despite the fact that we were studying this issue in a legislative committee, despite the fact that there were ongoing investigations and despite the fact that there was legislation tabled in this House, can the minister explain to Ontarians why she was not interested in what the audit team had to find?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I appreciate the opportunity to provide some clarity. There was a request from a member of the government side to release all payments made to Mazza. That information was released a year ago to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. In addition—separate issue—I ordered a forensic audit. The forensic investigation team from the Ministry of Finance went in and did that forensic audit. I received an interim report in February. There was enough in that interim report for me to refer the matter to the Ontario Provincial Police. They are doing that investigation. The interim report concerned me enough that I referred it to the OPP.

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When, in July 2012, the final report came in, it was provided to the deputy and he returned the envelope unopened with the following explanation: "For clarity, as the report is being provided to the OPP, I have not read, copied or otherwise accessed the report that FIT provided to my office so as not to"—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The Minister of Health has indicated that she was far too trusting of Dr. Mazza, but it seems, again, that the Minister of Health has missed the point. The Minister of Health of the province of Ontario—it's not her job to be trusting; it's her job to provide oversight of all the services provided.

This government has failed in its oversight of Ornge. It was this government that was fully aware of questions asked by the NDP long before Ornge made headlines in the newspapers. It was this government that failed to address whistle-blowers who raised issues and concerns about Ornge. It was this government that allowed Ornge to fall off the sunshine list. It was this government that failed to provide oversight.

Will this minister admit that she did not do her job?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me repeat: On December 22, 2011, I ordered a forensic audit. The audit team was there the next day. By February, they issued an interim report. I read that interim report. The interim report was troubling enough that I referred the matter to the OPP. We, on this side, let the police do the job of policing.

When the final report was delivered in July, the deputy minister—and I'm going to take the opportunity to finish this—"For clarity, as the report is being provided to the OPP, I have not read, copied or otherwise accessed the report ... provided to my office so as not to inadvertently impact the ongoing OPP investigation, and in the interests of transparency, I am returning the single hard copy of the report that was received." This is appropriate protocol, followed appropriately.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

New question.

ASSISTANCE TO THE DISABLED

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Ma question est pour le ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, l'honorable Ted McMeekin. All of us in our constituency work are inspired by individuals who are looking out for their families, striving to put bread on the table and enter Ontario's labour market. This struggle to integrate or to reintegrate into the workforce is especially telling and poignant in persons with disabilities. Though Ontario has led the country in job creation since the recession, with numbers cited during this question period, persons with disabilities can, of course, find this quite challenging.

Can the minister please inform this chamber what our government is doing en route to creating a more just and prosperous society to help people with a disability enter or re-enter the job market?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I want to thank the member for his question and his commitment. As a government, we are focused more on people's abilities than the alleged disability, and that is in large part why the budget spoke about the partnership table that we're creating to work with employers to employ folks with developmental challenges.

We're interested in creating jobs for everyone, regardless of their age, their ability, their sexual orientation or ethnicity. We're doing a pretty good job of that, to be frank. The employment supports component of the ODSP provides employment assistance for people with disabilities who are interested in preparing for employment. In fact, this program has had 4,537 clients enter the program and receive supports, and some 2,264 have actually found employment.

Now, I want to compliment the federal government here. They've been helpful in terms of providing funding. The contract is winding up. We hope it can be renegotiated.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you, Minister, for the update on the ODSP and labour issues. I know, of course, first-hand that folks with disabilities in my own riding are having some measure of success through these funding opportunities. I think they would also be encouraged to learn that negotiations between the governments of Canada and Ontario are proceeding. I understand, in a positive, collaborative and salutary direction.

This, of course, will affect many, many residents in my own riding of Etobicoke North, and I think it's important that we build on the past successes. I believe it's part of the mandate and responsibility of all governments to stand up for these people, to ensure that they get the supports that they need and deserve.

Speaker, would the minister please share with this House what might be the impacts of a reconfigured labour market agreement?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The labour market agreement for persons with disabilities serves a very important role in providing support for persons with disabilities, trying to break down the barriers to employment.

The federal government has announced its intentions to introduce a new generation of this agreement but has not yet put a proposal on the table. Speaker, it is so critical that these changes build on the success of the existing agreement and the programs currently supported.

It's my hope that the federal government will consider the successes of this agreement when they make these changes. Unfortunately, their approach to the labour market agreement, which funds our most vulnerable workers, would suggest otherwise. That approach, right now, has the federal government cutting 60% of funding

for these very important programs that serve our most vulnerable population. We hope they take a different approach with this new agreement that serves our people with disabilities in this province.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Minister, I've asked you this question before, and you didn't give me an answer, so I'm going to ask you again. With your 15% auto insurance reduction effort, all of the province's non-standard auto insurance companies have been called in by FSCO and directed to reduce their rates. Of course, non-standard companies insure the worst drivers on the road. They insure people with poor driving records, multiple speeding tickets and, worst of all, those with drunk-driving offences. Are you pleased with rewarding Ontario's worst drivers?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question. The member opposite makes reference to the non-standard auto insurance that, in fact, does provide a system of last resort for those individuals with bad driving records. The fact of the matter is, they represent about 1.5% to 3% of the market, and they are not the ones that we're targeting. We're targeting safe drivers; we're targeting and protecting consumers.

The member opposite should be supporting our initiatives to lower premiums for all the consumers in this province who are suffering because of the high costs of claims. An auto fraud task force that has been commissioned by our government over the last number of years is helping us reduce those costs of claims, and that is what we are doing to try to protect consumers in our marketplace.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Minister, you've missed the target. You've hit Ontario's worst drivers with rate reductions.

This morning, Mothers Against Drunk Driving issued a press release drawing attention to your irresponsible policy. They rightfully say that the biggest benefits in terms of dollars will go to the most dangerous drivers on the roads.

Minister, in your rush to appease the NDP and cling desperately to power, you've implemented a policy clearly without thinking about the consequences. It seems the message you want to send to drunk drivers is, "Don't worry about your high premiums. If we need to pander to the NDP's demands to stay in power, you'll be first in line to get your lower rates."

Now that MADD has come out and exposed the dangers of your price-fixing scheme, will you finally admit that you have not thought through the policy, correct your mistake and implement our four-point plan to reduce rates for good drivers in this province?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member opposite talks about a plan that they don't have and they've just sort of

done on the fly. We have been at this for a number of years to try and support the nine million consumers—

Mr. Jeff Yurek: You're lying. You're lying.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Elgin—Middlesex—London will withdraw.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Withdraw.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, our commitment that we've been doing on this side of the House is to bring down rates to Ontario's nine million drivers. The member opposite is spinning, talking about drunk drivers and those who have bad records. They're not the ones who are going to benefit from these initiatives, because they are the worst drivers. There's going to always have to be an insurer of last resort to accommodate them, but they're not benefiting from this.

The ones who are going to benefit are safe drivers, the ones who institute a number of initiatives to bring down their rates. We are going to work with them and the other nine million drivers to bring those rates down for consumers. The member opposite should stand with us on this, and they should support consumers in our province.

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WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Minister, last Friday in Sudbury, quite unfortunately, we had a number of fatalities as a result of accidents on highways in and around Sudbury. We had two people who died as a result of a three-vehicle crash on Highway 17, west of Webbwood, and then we had another person die as a result of a single-vehicle accident on Highway 6 just between Little Current and Espanola.

Considering that you reported to this House, and you reported to myself and other northern members, that you've increased the number of equipment that is on highways, why is it that highways are still being closed in northern Ontario where we never used to see that in the past?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, first of all, my heart—and I know that of my colleagues here in the House—goes out to the people who have lost loved ones in a very tragic accident. I think for all of us who live in northern climates with icy winter roads and who have lived in parts of this country where it gets very cold, this is a reality that is all too often and all too tragically part of life. So my prayers and heartfelt thoughts go to the families.

We, as a government, have added 50 different crews in northeastern and northwestern Ontario. It is the largest expansion in the history of Ontario in snow removal and winter maintenance. We have also required now that those companies have to replace all of their equipment at the rate of 10% per year, so that over every decade all equipment will be new. MTO staff are working on stronger reviews and working with municipal leaders.

We have the safest roads and highways in North America with low fatality rates. These investments will,

over this winter, reduce those accident rates, and I have worked with the member opposite and will continue to identify these obstacles and solve them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, I'm shocked that you would say it's a reality that people have to die while driving on roads in northern Ontario. That, quite frankly, is not acceptable as an answer.

But I'm going to ask you again. We in northern Ontario want to let you into a little secret: It's been snowing for centuries and for millennia, and for years when we had MTO take care of our highways, we never had conditions of roads as we see them today. Last Friday, we had three fatalities just in the Sudbury area. There was another fatality on Highway 69. The question is, why is it that we're having the amount of road closures and the amount of accidents as compared to before?

So I ask you again, despite the increase of equipment that you announced yet but a few weeks ago, why is it that we are still having some of the worst road conditions as a result of your highway maintenance?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, what I said is that icy roads and driving conditions in a northern climate are the reality. I have lost friends in traffic fatalities. I read every single police report that comes forward and I look at the names of everyone who's lost—and I, as a minister, will tell you that safety, for me, for the Premier and for this government, is our single biggest priority.

We have fewer fatalities and accidents and the safest roads in North America. It's better than dry, warm places like Kansas and California, which is quite remarkable. We take every fatality, which means we have maintained the same standards—

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I think this is serious. I did not interrupt the member opposite. We're talking about people's lives here, and this government takes this quite seriously. For us, it's not politics.

I will be monitoring how those 50 new crews are deployed. I will continue to work with Minister Meilleur to monitor the policing and enforcement, and we will continue to look at every cause and solve every obstacle there is to public safety.

LAND USE PLANNING

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Speaker, the minister was recently in Ottawa holding a land use planning workshop at Carleton University with environmental groups, developers and municipalities, including Ottawa, North Dundas, Renfrew, South Glengarry and Russell, from my own riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell. Like many Ontarians, my constituents have numerous questions about how the land use planning and appeal system works and the role of the Ontario Municipal Board. Some find the current process complicated, difficult to navigate and even harder to understand.

Speaker, our government needs to ensure that our planning system works well for municipalities, community groups and developers, while remaining responsive to the challenging needs of our community. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can the minister explain to my constituents and all of Ontarians about how they can get involved in this important review?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Thank you to the member for the question. I was happy last Thursday, November 21, to join the member from Ottawa Centre as he held and initiated a consultation at Carleton University to discuss our review of the land use planning process. This system gives municipalities the tools to manage growth so that we can all build cities and towns that we want to live in, work in and raise our families in.

But we've heard from municipal leaders from across the province, and from planners, developers and the public, that the rules are sometimes complex and the delays and the appeals are frustrating. That's why our government has held regional workshops in Kitchener—Waterloo; in Ottawa, as I said; in Sault Ste. Marie and Thunder Bay. We're also going to hold one in my riding, in Peel region, on Thursday. In Toronto, we're shortly going to hear from everyday Ontarians on how we can make the system more responsive to Ontario's changing needs.

For those who can't make it in person, you can go to the website. We have a full consultation guidebook that will give everybody a chance to give their suggestions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Minister. It's great to hear that our government is focused on giving municipalities the tools they need to be able to plot their own destiny and build a community that works for their residents.

Despite that, Speaker, development, whether it's in Ottawa or Sudbury, Niagara Falls or Windsor, or even Rockland, in my riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, can still be contentious. While many communities are happy to welcome new residents, many are worried that the increased density will mean that strains on schools, infrastructure and highways, and our waste and stormwater systems will be pushed to capacity. They're concerned that these new houses, apartments or stores that are being built—that the current taxpayer will be on the hook for the necessary but expensive upgrades.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Could the minister explain to my constituents how this review of development charges could help my community prepare for potential growth?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'd like to thank the member for the question. Communities across Ontario are all experiencing the kinds of changes the member speaks about, that are happening in Ottawa and the surrounding region. Our government has been working with municipalities to ensure that the development doesn't mean that existing taxpayers are on the hook for costs required for new development.

However, we've heard that municipal leaders feel that the current system limits their ability to recover all of the

capital costs for some of their services, and their ability to pay for those vital infrastructure projects. We also heard from developers that they want more accountability and transparency. At the end of the day, I've heard from both groups that they want clarity, accountability and transparency.

At the end of the day, we believe it's time for a refresh and it's time to make sure the development charges system still answers all of the communities' needs across Ontario. So I want to encourage all Ontarians to have their say. I want to hear solid ideas to help us deal with the roots of our challenges. We want all Ontarians to have the tools in hand to plan for their future.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: To the Minister of Health: Minister, the day you determined that Ontario's health care system doesn't include Kimm Fletcher, the people of Ontario responded with their characteristic generosity and voted with their donations to help fund Kimm's prescribed medication, Avastin, which your Committee to Evaluate Drugs refused to list for OHIP coverage. I'm happy to say that despite your committee's obviously ill-advised conclusions, Kimm Fletcher's condition is responding to the drug, and a recent MRI shows that her tumour has stopped growing.

Minister, do you feel any remorse over your inaction on Kimm Fletcher's case in that the people of Ontario have taken it upon themselves to do your job?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.
Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, first let me say that I am delighted that Ms. Fletcher is seeing improvement. That is wonderful, and I am very, very pleased with that.

The second thing I want to say is there are cases where government does not fund certain drugs, for lack of evidence, and the community does come together, because they collectively do want to support that, even though it would not be prudent for government to fund it, for lack of evidence.

So I do congratulate the people of Milton and other people in this province who do come together to give people the hope they need for access to a drug that may not yet be proven but is still important to the family. I know that many people on all sides of this House have, in fact, participated in fundraisers for members in their community where the government is simply not in a position to fund that particular procedure.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Minister, you speak of an Ontario I'm not familiar with. Kimm is not a one-off.

Jay is a young teenager who needs an eye operation, coverage for which he has been denied, even though the operation will save his sight. Norma has IPF, idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, and needs the drug Esbriet in order

for her to have any quality of life. She has also been denied.

Minister, when will you stop letting your Committee to Evaluate Drugs classify you as missing in action when it comes to assisting Kimm, Jay and Norma, who have become victims of your irresponsible, hands-off approach to health care in Ontario? When are you going to remedy the situation that they and their families are facing, and indeed, all Ontarians may one day face? When, Minister? When will we have a Minister of Health back in Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: My question to the member opposite is, when will we have a little intellectual honesty when it comes to the petitions that he is raising? The petition that the member reads every day is factually false. He reads from the Committee to Evaluate Drugs, but he fails to say, however, that "The committee noted that using historical estimates of survival as the basis for comparison is not reliable because treatment standards have evolved and historical rates are derived from studies that used older, less effective treatments."

I think the member opposite owes it to the people he purports to represent to tell the truth and the whole truth.

DEFERRED VOTES

SCHOOL BOARDS COLLECTIVE BARGAINING ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA NÉGOCIATION COLLECTIVE DANS LES CONSEILS SCOLAIRES

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 122, An Act respecting collective bargaining in Ontario's school system / Projet de loi 122, Loi concernant la négociation collective dans le système scolaire de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1142 to 1147.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Will members take their seats, please? Would all members take their seats, please? All members, take your seats, please.

On October 30, 2013, Ms. Sandals moved second reading of Bill 122. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bisson, Gilles
Bradley, James J.
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael

Forster, Cindy
Fraser, John
Gerretsen, John
Gélinas, France
Gravelle, Michael
Hatfield, Percy
Horwath, Andrea
Hoskins, Eric
Hunter, Mitzie
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kwinter, Monte

Miller, Paul
Millooy, John
Moridi, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Natyshak, Taras
Oraziotti, David
Piruzza, Teresa
Prue, Michael
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Sattler, Peggy

Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
DiNovo, Cheri
Duguid, Brad
Fife, Catherine
Flynn, Kevin Daniel

Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Mantha, Michael
Marchese, Rosario
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine

Schein, Jonah
Singh, Jagmeet
Sousa, Charles
Tabuns, Peter
Taylor, Monique
Vanthof, John
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to introduce a friend of mine who is making his way here this afternoon. Peter Fries is a professor of automotive engineering at the University of Windsor. He's also the scientific director and CEO of Auto 21, which is Canada's national automotive research network. And, Speaker, you'll be delighted to know he is a former page. In fact, in 1971, his group of pages were in the last sitting of the Robarts government, the first sitting of the Davis government, and it was the first group of pages to have girls amongst their members.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Consumer Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Oh, thank you, Speaker. They are in the building somewhere. Unfortunately, I didn't get to acknowledge the students from Cardinal Leger Catholic School in Pickering-Scarborough East this morning. It's great to have them here at the Ontario Legislature today.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: In the same vein, I didn't get to acknowledge the students from St. Cecilia, who came and sang beautifully—I heard some of it. I just want to thank them for their presence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm glad that the members have found a way, during introductions, to do the non-introductions. It's very good.

Member from Scarborough-Guildwood.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Speaker, I notice that in the gallery today is my friend Dr. Catherine Chandler-Crichlow, from the Toronto Financial Services Alliance. I'd like to welcome her to the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome all our guests.

Further introductions? The member from Prince Edward-Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm just trying to remember them off the top of my head here, which is always dangerous, as you know.

I would like to welcome some people from the Quinte Economic Development Commission who are here, and they have the big CME reception after. Chris King is in attendance today, as is Chuck O'Malley. Ted Reid is the chair of the board. I believe Mike Hewitt is here as well, and Derrick Morgan is visiting—all from the Quinte Economic Development Commission.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I got them all.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions?

Mr. Michael Prue: It's my privilege to introduce Mr. Brian Graff from the riding of Beaches-East York. He is here today to watch the introduction of a bill.

Hon. Michael Coteau: It's my pleasure to welcome the recipients of the Ontario Award for Leadership in Immigrant Employment, our guests here. We have Marion Annau from Connect Legal; Mario Longo, Christina Campbell and Leslie Rodgers from Mount Sinai Hospital; and Catherine Chandler-Crichlow from

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Fedeli, Victor
Hardeman, Ernie
Hillier, Randy
Holyday, Douglas C.
Hudak, Tim
Jackson, Rod

Jones, Sylvia
Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack
McDonell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Milligan, Rob E.
Munro, Julia
Nicholls, Rick
O'Toole, John

Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pettapiece, Randy
Scott, Laurie
Shurman, Peter
Smith, Todd
Thompson, Lisa M.
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 65; the nays are 31.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Speaker, I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): So ordered.

The Minister of Energy, on a point of order.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to correct the record on my response to the member from Nepean-Carleton. The rate-based costs of the relocated gas plants are included in the long-term energy plan, to commence when the plants are commissioned.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister is correct: All members have an opportunity to correct their record, and he had a point of order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order, the member from Nepean-Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I have been informed by some members of the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus that they were not given a copy of the Liberals' long-term energy plan. I wonder if the minister could provide that to the members of this House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not a point of order.

There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1152 to 1500.

the Centre of Excellence in Financial Services Education. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

JOHN ZIVCIC

Mr. Steve Clark: As the Ontario PC critic for community safety and correctional services, I rise on behalf of our caucus and our leader, Tim Hudak, to extend our heartfelt condolences to the family and colleagues of Toronto police constable John Zivcic. Just 34, Constable Zivcic died yesterday from injuries suffered in a tragic on-duty collision. An officer with the Toronto Police Service, 22 Division, he was responding to an emergency call for an impaired driver. His death is a stark reminder of the risk that police officers and all emergency responders take every day by putting on their uniform. Brave women and men like Constable Zivcic put their lives on the line to keep us and those we love safe from harm.

He was a six-year veteran of the Toronto force. He was an outstanding officer who had always made a strong impression with his fellow officers and superiors. A former shift supervisor described him as "larger than life.... He was always the first one at the call.... You could always count on him to be there."

An anecdote from a Toronto Star article speaks volumes about who Constable Zivcic was. While vacationing in Cuba, the always-on-duty-officer side of him stopped to assist at a motorcycle accident, and his human compassion side compelled him to help pay the victim's medical expenses. That combination made Constable Zivcic a great officer and an even better person.

I join all Ontarians in mourning the loss of Constable John Zivcic and thanking his family for sharing him with us.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mr. Jonah Schein: On December 6 across Canada, we remember the day in 1989 when 14 young women were murdered at the École Polytechnique in Montreal. It's a time to reflect on that tragic day and it's an important reminder of the violence that women experience every day in this country.

Half of all women in Canada will experience at least one incident of physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. Women are 11 times more likely than men to be a victim of sexual offences and three times more likely to be the victims of criminal harassment. Speaker, these numbers are shocking and this reality is totally unacceptable.

Too many women know this violence first-hand, whether it's on our streets, in their workplaces or in their homes. So it's incumbent on men in this province to take responsibility for our own actions and the actions of our peers and to speak up against violence, sexism and

misogyny in our communities and in our culture. And it's incumbent upon us as politicians to advocate for public policies and laws that address this violence.

We know that policies that create affordable housing, child care and safe shelters; investments in public transit, public education and income security programs; and enforcement of employment standards make us a stronger and fairer society. It's cuts to these programs that put vulnerable members of our communities at greater risk of violence.

I ask for us to reflect today on this tragedy and to recommit ourselves to creating a world where our mothers, daughters, sisters, partners, colleagues and friends do not need to fear.

VOLUNTEERS

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It is always a pleasure to talk about all the great work the volunteers in our communities do and how they improve our quality of life.

Over the last two weekends, I've had the opportunity to celebrate the beginning of the holiday season with my constituents at both the Richmond Hill and Markham Santa Claus parades. The Richmond Hill Santa Claus Parade, organized by the town of Richmond Hill, was held on November 24, and this past Saturday, I had the opportunity to participate in the 41st Markham Santa Claus Parade, presented by the Rotary Club of Markham-Unionville and the Rotary Club of Markham Sunrise.

I want to commend the hard work of the many volunteers at both parades. This is truly a massive undertaking for so many people. What truly impressed me was how both parades gave back to the community. At the Richmond Hill parade, where the theme was "Once Upon a Christmas," volunteers collected canned goods and other essential items for the Richmond Hill food bank, while the Markham parade featured a toy drive for Yellow Brick House, a women's shelter that does fantastic work in York region. It is no surprise, Speaker, that the theme of the Markham parade was "Goodwill unto Others."

In the spirit of the holiday season, I would encourage all members of the House to keep this theme in mind for the remainder of our session.

MOE RACINE

Mr. Jim McDonell: They say good things come to those who wait. Well, for Moe—Maurice—Racine from Cornwall, in my riding of Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, that stands true.

The Ottawa Rough Riders legend Moe "The Toe" will be inducted into the Canadian Football Hall of Fame, the class of 2014. Moe won four Grey Cups while appearing in five title games and was a four-time all-star as an offensive lineman and kicker for the Ottawa Rough Riders, winning the 1966 CFL scoring title. He only missed nine games over a 17-year career in Ottawa and holds the franchise record by playing in 213 regular season games. He finished his career with 392 points, not

bad considering that he spent the final seven years of his career as strictly an offensive lineman.

Moe's number 62 was retired by the Rough Riders, and he is one of only three linemen to have that honour bestowed upon him.

As Cornwall's most famous football son, Moe was inducted in the Cornwall Sports Hall of Fame in 1968 and later in the Ottawa Sports Hall of Fame in 1984. But he is now rightfully being recognized at the national level for his induction into the Canadian Football Hall of Fame.

1510

Moe and his wife, Donna, are spending their retirement years in Cornwall, fondly loved by their community, their four children—Thom, Scott, Lee Ann and Bruce—and six grandchildren.

Congratulations, Moe "The Toe."

TIBETAN IMMIGRANTS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Many of you know that I have one of the largest Tibetan communities, in my riding of Parkdale–High Park, anywhere outside of Nepal and outside of India. You've also seen me rise, often in Tibetan dress, here to talk about the horrors of the occupation in Tibet. Those still continue. Over 120 Tibetans have self-immolated; the picture of His Holiness the Dalai Lama is not allowed to be shown; their language is not allowed to be spoken etc.

But today I stand with some good news, because last week the first 17 Tibetans of an estimated 1,000 that have been allowed in by the federal government, under a promise that was made to His Holiness the Dalai Lama when he was here in Canada the last time, were allowed to come in as permanent residents from India. This is the first time in two generations that this has been allowed to happen. So there's great celebration and jubilation at the Tibetan Canadian Cultural Centre.

We look forward to welcoming even more Tibetans over the course of the next little while, sponsored by loving Canadians and Tibetan families.

We are extremely thankful for this opportunity—a very welcome addition to our community.

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: It is my pleasure to rise in the House today and talk about growing small businesses and creating jobs for youth. This past Friday, I had the opportunity to host a forum for small businesses in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood. The focus of the forum was to bring local businesses together to discuss the youth employment fund and how the fund can help grow businesses and create jobs for youth in Scarborough–Guildwood.

Over 75 businesses and five local employment agencies were present. We were also joined by my colleague the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Local businesses in Scarborough–Guildwood like Esthetic Hair, I Fix You PC, West Hill Optical, and

Sparkling Green Cleaning Services had a chance to network with each other, while gaining information to grow their businesses. It was a fantastic opportunity to connect with the local businesses as well as to connect the agencies and resources.

We also had the opportunity to hear a success story from a young person named Brandon Russell, who, through working with PCPI, a local employment agency, is now gainfully employed at Shoppers Drug Mart.

Since the forum, many local business owners have called my constituency office to let us know that the forum was very helpful, in terms of giving them the tools they need to move forward and to take advantage of the fund.

With the participation of different parts of the Scarborough–Guildwood community in a forum like this, I know that we can grow small businesses and create jobs and opportunities for youth in our community.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, this government continues to use Ontario Northland as a political pawn. They've left 1,000 employees, their families and the communities in which they live in limbo for nearly two years now, and that's still the case today, no matter what wiggle words the Liberals may be using now.

The Auditor General's report on the Liberals' fire sale scheme is due out soon, hopefully next week, but they've known what's in it all along. The gas plant scandal documents show the Liberals would not save \$265 million, as they put in the budget, but would, rather, cost the taxpayers \$790 million.

A change in language isn't the same as a change in direction. It's time the Liberals put their cards on the table, as we did in the Ontario PC northern white paper, and lay out a real plan for Ontario Northland and the Ring of Fire.

I believe the best way to ship ore is by rail, and Ontario Northland is already in the rail business.

Speaker, northerners have self-respect and dignity. We will not roll over like trained seals to clap every time the government decides to change a word, or fawn over the minister's new, sudden-found benevolence. We will not settle for the table scraps that this government arbitrarily decides to pass out. The gas plant scandal has shown us that the Liberals will go to any lengths to dupe Ontarians if it's in their political interest.

ST. CLAIR WEST SERVICES FOR SENIORS

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I am happy today to recognize the services to my community provided by St. Clair West Services for Seniors, which recently celebrated their 40th anniversary. For four decades, they have provided valuable, innovative and caring support services to older and disabled adults who wish to maintain their quality of life while living in their own homes.

Since 1973, the organization has provided dignity and respect to local seniors by providing a number of important services, including adult day services, case management, home help, Meals on Wheels, respite care, supportive housing and transportation, in a variety of different languages.

It is inspirational how this group has grown from a handful of local churches running a Meals on Wheels program to today employing 90 staff with 35 placement students and over 250 volunteers serving nearly 2,000 clients and participants in our diverse community of York South–Weston.

I am proud that the government of Ontario provides support to St. Clair West Services for Seniors through the Central and Toronto Central LHINs and the Ontario Trillium Foundation to help them help the community.

I extend my congratulations and thanks today to St. Clair West Services for Seniors for all the work they have done in the community and wish them the best of success for the future as they work to support local seniors.

AUTO GUYS

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize Lynda Groom and Bob Ward, owners of Auto Guys in St. Thomas. Auto Guys is a family owned and operated automotive service centre which has served the community of St. Thomas with distinction for over 30 years.

A month ago, they entered a tire recycling drive competition with 28 other businesses from across the province. The competition, organized jointly by CAA and the Ontario Tire Stewardship, put up a \$20,000 grand prize to be contributed to a local school for things like new playground equipment and landscaping.

Last year, all 19 teams involved in the competition collected 1,235 tires. I'm pleased to learn this morning that Auto Guys alone collected 2,235 tires, far surpassing the other competitors. The \$20,000 grand prize will go to Elgin Court Public School to enhance the school's playground equipment and landscaping.

I want to congratulate Lynda and Bob on their latest success and thank them for their continued commitment to making our community a better place.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CHILD CARE MODERNIZATION ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA MODERNISATION DES SERVICES DE GARDE D'ENFANTS

Mrs. Sandals moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 143, An Act to enact the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2013, to repeal the Day Nurseries Act, to amend the Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007 and the Education Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 143, Loi édictant la Loi de 2013 sur la garde d'enfants et la petite enfance, abrogeant la Loi sur les garderies, modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les*

éducatrices et les éducateurs de la petite enfance et la Loi sur l'éducation et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'll make my statement during ministerial statements, Speaker.

PLANNING AMENDMENT ACT (EXTENSION OF TIMELINES), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'AMÉNAGEMENT DU TERRITOIRE (PROROGATION DE DÉLAIS)

Mr. Prue moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 144, An Act to amend the Planning Act to extend certain timelines / *Projet de loi 144, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire pour proroger certains délais.*

1520

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement?

Mr. Michael Prue: The bill extends certain timelines under the Planning Act.

Subsection 17(40) of the act currently provides for an appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board if the approval authority fails to give notice of a decision in respect of all or part of a plan within 180 days after receipt of the plan. The bill extends the timeline to 365 days.

Subsection 34(11) of the act currently provides for an appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board if council refuses an application for an amendment to a bylaw passed under this section or a predecessor section, or refuses or neglects to make a decision on it within 120 days after receipt of the application. The bill extends the timeline to 365 days.

Subsection 45(4) of the act currently requires the committee of adjustment to hold a hearing within 30 days after receipt of an application under subsection 45(1). The bill extends the timeline to 90 days.

Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not thank Mr. Graff for the idea.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (HELMET EXEMPTION FOR SIKH MOTORCYCLISTS), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (EXEMPTION DE L'OBLIGATION DE PORT DU CASQUE POUR LES MOTOCYCLISTES SIKHS)

Mr. Singh moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 145, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to exempt Sikh motorcyclists from the requirement to wear a helmet / *Projet de loi 145, Loi modifiant le Code de la route pour exempter les motocyclistes sikhs de l'obligation de porter un casque.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Section 104 of the Highway Traffic Act requires a person riding or operating a motorcycle or a motor-assisted bicycle on a highway to wear a helmet. The bill exempts members of the Sikh religion who have unshorn hair and who habitually wear turbans from the section 104 requirement of the act to wear a helmet. This would keep us in line with what's happening in the United Kingdom, as well as in Manitoba and British Columbia, and would ensure legislative protection for an article of faith for the Sikh community.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Motions? The Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding Bill 111.

I move that, when the order for second reading of Bill 111, the Modernizing Regulation of the Legal Profession Act, 2013, is next called, the question shall be put immediately, without further debate or amendment; and,

Should Bill 111 receive second reading, the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order shall immediately be called and the question put without further debate or amendment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister has moved unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? I heard a no.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CHILD CARE

Hon. Liz Sandals: Child care is a key part of the early years system, and it plays a critical role for Ontario's families, communities and the economy. Today, I am pleased to introduce the Child Care Modernization Act, which you will be relieved to know is what we're going to call it, rather than the 10-line-long title that's the legal title.

The Child Care Modernization Act, if passed, will modernize and build a high-quality child care and early years system that is more responsive to parents, and children's needs.

Our government has already taken a number of steps in this area. For example, last year we implemented a new child care funding formula that is based on current demographics and population trends. We've developed an early years policy framework that provides a vision

and strategic direction for programs and services for children up to six years of age. And we're implementing full-day kindergarten, which will serve approximately 265,000 children annually by next fall.

While we've made improvements to the current early years system, the legislation that regulates the child care sector hasn't changed fundamentally since the 1980s. But the world around us has changed. That is why we are taking the next steps to repeal and replace the old Day Nurseries Act.

The proposed legislation I am introducing today would help transform the child care and early years system to better meet the needs of the parents who use and rely on the system and the children who are placed in its care.

The current legislation that governs child care, the Day Nurseries Act, was enacted in 1946 and has not been comprehensively updated since 30 years ago, in 1983. It does not reflect the current needs of our children and parents, which is why we need to take action.

The proposed legislation would not only enhance safety but also foster the learning, development, health and well-being of Ontario's children.

If passed, the Child Care Modernization Act would provide the government with greater enforcement tools, including the authority to issue administrative penalties of up to \$100,000 per infraction by a provider. It would also increase the maximum penalty for a successful prosecution of offences in the courts from the current \$2,000 to \$250,000.

It would also increase access to spaces in licensed home child care settings by increasing the number of children that licensed home child care providers can care for, from five to six. If all current licensed home child care providers took on one additional space, they would create approximately 6,000 new child care spaces in Ontario.

The act would also clarify what programs or activities are exempt from requiring a licence, including care provided by relatives, babysitting, nannies, and camps that provide programs for school-age children.

It would also remove the current exemption that allows some private schools to care for more than five children under the age of four without a licence.

The act would also amend the Education Act to meet our commitment to offer before- and after-school programs for six- to 12-year-olds, where there is sufficient demand by parents. Programs could be delivered directly by boards, by third-party child care providers, or by authorized recreation providers.

Ontario is already a leader in publicly funded education, having made great progress in student achievement. This legislation would, if passed, build on our progress and position Ontario to become a future leader in child care and early years services.

Speaker, the proposed legislation establishes a foundation for a more responsive, high-quality and accessible child care and early years system for children and families in Ontario. This new legislation is an essential

next step in modernizing our child care sector, and the next step to a better future for Ontario's children.

I look forward to having every member of this House support this very important bill.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, the United Nations has designated December 3 as the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. On this day, nations around the world pause to reflect on the physical, social, economic and attitudinal barriers that exclude persons with disabilities from participating as equal members of society.

1530

Ontario has made a commitment to make the province fully accessible by 2025, the first province in the country to do so. In fact, Ontario was the first jurisdiction in the world to move to a modern regulatory regime that mandates accessibility. In 2005, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, or the AODA, came into force with unanimous support from all parties in this Legislature.

This year, our government's speech from the throne transferred the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario to my ministry, the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Employment. With this transfer, our resolve to make our province accessible and inclusive continues with determination. As the minister responsible for the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, one of my top priorities is to ensure that all Ontarians living with a disability have barriers to employment opportunities removed and that all workplaces become inclusive.

By moving the accessibility directorate to my ministry, we have an unprecedented opportunity and responsibility to engage with business, not only to ensure that they're complying with the AODA—which, in fact, by law they are required to—but also to make the business case for greater accessibility and broader inclusion.

Mr. Speaker, one in seven Ontarians has a disability, and that number is growing both here and around the world. Businesses will benefit by opening themselves up to a new and growing base of consumers. Complying with the AODA makes good business sense, but from my interactions with business, I can tell you that it's about more than just that; it's about the values we all share, namely, a more inclusive society.

We're helping our businesses across the province know what they must do to ensure that they are complying with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. We're investing in a much more robust awareness and marketing campaign so that more businesses are aware of what their obligations are under the AODA and how they can get there.

And we are enforcing the AODA. Currently, the Ontario public service and 100% of the broader public sector are complying with their requirements under the AODA. But unfortunately, the same cannot be said of the private sector, where only approximately 30% have met their reporting requirements.

My ministry continues to pursue enforcement to bring more private sector organizations in compliance with this important piece of legislation. Last month, we sent out 2,500 enforcement letters to non-compliant businesses. We will continue to work hard—including through audits and inspections and, if required, fines and the court system—to improve our private sector compliance. We have an enforcement plan and we will implement it.

To encourage more businesses to take the lead, we are creating opportunities to spotlight the good work that businesses are doing to become more accessible. Earlier last month, I had the privilege to present a new award that we created this year for excellence in accessible employment through the Ontario Business Achievement Awards. That award this year, the very first award, went to Cohen Highley Lawyers, a law firm with locations in London, Kitchener, Sarnia and Chatham, who are leaders in the province in creating an accessible workplace.

Recognizing that we still have a long way to go in making our workplaces more accessible, together with the business community and accessibility advocates, I've directed my ministry to develop and publish an employment strategy to remove barriers for persons with disabilities in the workforce and create an inclusive environment in the workforce for employment of persons with disabilities.

We are taking action, Mr. Speaker, because we know that there is much more work to be done to achieve our common goal of an accessible province by 2025. We know that our results—I know that our results—to date aren't good enough, but those results only motivate us to do better, to work even harder with our colleagues in the accessibility and business communities to meet our goals and create a province that is inclusive for all.

To advise and support our plan to become an accessible province by 2025, we've established a combined Accessibility Standards Advisory Council/Standards Development Committee. It draws on a diverse membership from across our province's disability community, from business, the broader public sector, and not-for-profit organizations. The committee's first order of business is to review Ontario's customer service standard.

To keep the province on target and to accomplish our ambitious goals, I have appointed Mayo Moran, Dean, and James Marshall Tory, professor of law, at the University of Toronto, to lead the second review of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Dean Moran has joined us today here in the Legislature.

Dean Moran will consult with the public as well as with important stakeholders in our disability and advocacy communities, businesses and the broader public sector, to ensure that we're taking advantage of all opportunities to make our province more inclusive.

Ontario will also have an opportunity to demonstrate how much we've accomplished in building an accessible province when we welcome the world to the Pan Am/Parapan Am Games in 2015. That year, we will also be celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. We will have a real

opportunity for the games—in fact, the first fully accessible games—to leave a lasting legacy when it comes to a more accessible province. We will seize that opportunity.

Today, on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, I ask all members of the House to consider just how much Ontario has achieved on accessibility over the past several years, but also on the things we still must accomplish together.

I'm proud to recognize the strong advocates that we have here in the House today to hear this statement. Our AODA reviewer, as I mentioned, Dean Mayo Moran; Dean Walker, from our Accessibility Standards Advisory Council, the ASAC; Abidah Lalani from the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada; and Janet McMaster from the Ontario March of Dimes are joining us today.

I also want to thank today's interpreter, Sharon Hepner.

I also want to particularly acknowledge my colleague to my right, Tracy MacCharles, for her tremendous and ongoing contribution to helping to create an inclusive Ontario and advocating so strongly on behalf of persons with disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, I thought it was important to invite members of the accessibility community and their colleagues to this statement so that I could commit to them, to this House and to all Ontarians with disabilities that we will make this province fully accessible by 2025. We will deliver on our shared goal of a fully accessible and inclusive society.

I look forward to continuing to work with them and with all members of this House to achieve that important goal.

ONTARIO AWARD FOR LEADERSHIP IN IMMIGRANT EMPLOYMENT

Hon. Michael Coteau: I rise today to recognize the first recipients of the Ontario Award for Leadership in Immigrant Employment. Our government created this award to acknowledge the important role that employers play in the success of newcomers and the economic growth of our province.

It has been a very exciting year for new and prospective Ontarians as we continue to implement our government's immigration strategy. We've reached some milestones and have laid the groundwork to meet many more in the months to come.

If I had to give this year a theme, it would be job creation. Over the past several months, I have been travelling the province in partnership with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce to speak with employers about immigration policies and their hiring practices. It has given me a better understanding of the needs and challenges that Ontario employers face, and it has given me insight into what is needed to find the right approaches for our diverse communities.

The message from those consultations is that employers need all levels of government to make the process as

smooth as possible when hiring the best and the brightest. Through the various pillars of the immigration strategy, we are doing our part. Our government is committed to ensuring that newcomers and their families receive the training and supports necessary to be successful here in Ontario.

But it's ultimately employers who put the talents of newcomers to work. So to recognize the good work that is already under way in the province, we created the Ontario Award for Leadership in Immigrant Employment. Five outstanding recipients from across the province received the award this year at the Ontario Economic Summit.

Marion Annau was recognized in the champion category as the founder of Connect Legal in Toronto, the first legal services clinic of its kind in Canada. It has helped over 1,000 low-resource small business owners get started through one-to-one legal advice and interactive workshops.

WIL Employment was also honoured in the champion category. Since 1984, WIL Employment has been helping immigrants achieve success in London, Ontario, by helping them find opportunities and adapt to changing expectations in the workplace. They leverage their broad scope and community connections to provide personalized help to the clients they serve, which also has a direct impact on the community at large.

Dyversity Communications took home an award in the employer category for connecting Canadians and global brands with a growing number of ethnic consumers in Canada. Based in Thornhill, almost the entire team is first-generation immigrants, and the company invests its resources towards hiring, training and retaining its employees.

Joseph Ng was recognized in the entrepreneur category, as the founder of JNE Consulting Ltd., a full-service, multidisciplinary engineering firm in Hamilton that serves a wide range of industries. His group of companies employs hundreds of professionals, many of whom are new Canadians.

Mount Sinai Hospital was also selected in the employer category, as an employer of a diverse team of nurses, physicians and clinicians, which serves the diverse Toronto community. They support their staff through mentorship, training and strategic partnerships, so that their patients benefit from culturally sensitive, expert care.

Representatives from the hospital are here in the gallery today. Welcome. Let's give them a big round of applause.

Mr. Speaker, these champions of immigrant success in the workplace are vital to building a stronger economy. They are innovators and job creators. These are organizations that look beyond origin and recruit based on attitude, drive and skill.

It gives me great pleasure to celebrate employers who are making the most of the province's diverse workforce. They support our government's economic plan to invest in people, build modern infrastructure and support a dynamic and innovative business climate.

These employers are a model for others to follow for the continued growth and prosperity of Ontario's economy and society. I am happy to hold them up as examples and to share their successes here today with my colleagues here in the Ontario Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Rob Leone: The safety of our children is one of our number one concerns in the PC caucus. I want to thank the minister for bringing forward legislation that will ensure that children's safety is a primary concern, but I have to say that she's late to the game.

The reality is that the minister was either unaware or didn't really care about the concerns that were raised earlier this summer about the limitations of her child care policy. Five months later, we finally have a piece of legislation to deal with these concerns.

The ministry failed to answer 25 of 448 complaints made about unlicensed day cares between January 1, 2012, and July 12, 2013, by the minister's own admission. She failed to follow up with site visits for 24 complaints—18 of which were in Barrie, which includes Vaughan; two in London; and four in Ottawa—until this year.

We're thankful that the minister has finally brought forward some legislation to deal with these matters, but we're very concerned about the time it has taken to do that.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's an honour to rise today on behalf of the PC caucus and respond to the minister's statement on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

But what would have made this day memorable, what would have made this day special, is if the Premier could have stood up and finally issued that apology to the survivors of the Huronia Regional Centre.

After many, many months of legal delays, on September 17 the Ontario government reached a \$35-million settlement with the survivors of the Huronia Regional Centre. The settlement was the result of a large lawsuit centred around abuse suffered at the facility.

As part of that settlement in September, the Ontario government was supposed to also issue a formal apology to all former residents, but, to date, that has not happened. Today would have been a perfect day to do that.

I want to share with the members of the House an excerpt from a letter written by one of the Huronia survivors:

"We want Kathleen Wynne to give the apology to all of us in person because she is responsible.... Once the government apologizes to us, then we can move on with our lives because the whole apology will help. We will be satisfied for getting the apology from her."

Speaker, I think the best way for this government to mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities would be to finally apologize to all of those individuals with disabilities who suffered so terribly for so many years in the Huronia Regional Centre.

ONTARIO AWARD FOR LEADERSHIP IN IMMIGRANT EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Todd Smith: I rise today to recognize five great employers that the province has chosen as leaders in immigrant employment.

What this award fundamentally touches on is what brings many immigrants to Ontario every year. They arrive here with a fundamental belief that a better life for their families can be built right here in Ontario.

These awards celebrate the entrepreneurial spirit of many of Ontario's communities of new Canadians. Ontario remains the most multicultural, diverse society in Canada, with a proud legacy of tolerance and religious freedom.

This year's awards, the first of their kind, celebrate employers from the Toronto area, Hamilton and London who have been exemplary champions of diversity in the workplace.

Marion Annau of Connect Legal in Toronto, and Dyversity Communications of Thornhill, were winners in the "small organization" category. In the "large organization" category, awards were presented to WIL Employment, which has been helping new Canadians find jobs in the London area since 1984, and Mount Sinai Hospital here in Toronto, which employs one of the most diverse medical staffs in the world.

In the entrepreneurial category, Joseph Ng and his engineering firm, JNE Consulting, of Hamilton took home the top honours.

Our entrepreneurs and small business owners serve as drivers of our economy but also, in many cases, they are the primary employers of new Canadians who come to Ontario for a better, more stable life for their families.

While we all celebrate the success of this year's winners and we salute them for their contributions that they have made to keep Ontario's economy afloat, as we learned yesterday, Ontario's business owners can expect their electricity rates to increase by another 42% over the next five years, and that means that it's going to be harder for employers just to keep the lights on, let alone hire more people.

The future of Ontario doesn't have to be one of high hydro rates and higher debt. It doesn't have to be a future of less opportunity and fewer jobs. We need more employers like the ones we're honouring today. It would just be nice if we didn't have a government that made it harder for them every day to do business here in Ontario.

Congratulations to all the award winners.

CHILD CARE

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to rise today and say that I welcome the introduction of the Child Care

Modernization Act. I welcome the fact that the government is finally taking some action to ensure better protection of our children in all daycare settings. However, it's shameful that it took the tragic and unnecessary deaths of Ontario children before the government finally moved to provide better oversight.

This is an extensive bill, and it is one that we will need to look at very closely. We have a general overview, but we know that the devil is always in the details. New Democrats want to see prompt debate on this bill, and we want to see extensive hearings at committee, to make sure that we're finally getting it right.

Existing problems in the child care sector just don't require new legislation; they require commitment to action. This government must act on each and every complaint received about child care in Ontario, and they must ensure that there are enough inspectors to do the job. New legislation won't save lives if complaints continue to be ignored.

I also look forward to the forthcoming recommendations from the Ombudsman on this matter. I hope that those recommendations, along with a thorough review of the new legislation, can be used to improve child care in Ontario.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I ring with my friend from Dufferin—Caledon, absolutely. I asked in this House for that apology, and we still have not received it, for the victims at Huronia.

I also want to talk about the report card that this government received from those who know best, and that's the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Alliance, those who live with disabilities. They said very pointedly, "The Ontario government has not kept its promise to effectively enforce the AODA. On November 18, 2013, we revealed"—that's them—"that the government has known that fully 70% of Ontario private sector organizations with at least 20 employees have been violating the AODA's accessibility reporting requirement for over 10 months."

They also revealed that "the government has not conducted"—listen to this—"a single inspection of any organization, nor issued a single compliance order, nor imposed any monetary penalties under the AODA, even though it has ample power to do so, and has known about these rampant violations" for quite a while.

1550

It has also shown that the government has had ample unused funds appropriated for the AODA's implementation and enforcement. Unused appropriated funds from 2005 to 2013 total \$24 million that they could have been using. Not only that, but when the AODA Alliance actually asked for information about this, they were denied it unless they paid over \$2,000 through a freedom-of-information act request, which I also raised in this House.

I conclude with their words, not mine. They say, "December 3, the international day for people with disabilities, should not be yet another day for platitudes and lofty rhetoric." It shouldn't be a day—I'm paraphrasing here—for more reviews, panels and letters. "It should be a day for launching decisive, concrete action that will improve the lives of Ontarians with disabilities." Their words, not mine.

ONTARIO AWARD FOR LEADERSHIP IN IMMIGRANT EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Michael Prue: I'd like to start by saluting the winners who were announced here earlier today, to be sure—Joseph Ng, Albert Yue, Anne Langille, Marion Annau, Romy Thomas and Mario Longo—for the excellent work. These people actually understand, in my view, the dynamic of this province. They understand that more than 100,000 immigrants come to Ontario each and every year. They understand that those people come from the far corners of the earth for the opportunities that exist in this province, including the opportunity for meaningful work. They understand, these winners, only too well that without a job it is impossible for families to get ahead, it is impossible to have higher education for themselves or for their children and it is impossible, in many cases, for women to go out there and do what is necessary to improve their lives.

I also want to say to the minister, while I'm on my feet, that I salute these winners, but there is so much more this ministry can do, and I ask you to first of all look to finding daycare for women so that they can have their children in proper daycare, so that they are afforded the opportunity to go out and learn English as a second language. Without that opportunity, the immense opportunities of this province will never be seen by them. This ministry should be looking at that field in their next round of endeavour.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

PETITIONS

PERSONAL SUPPORT WORKERS

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas current community care access centre personal support worker guidelines do not provide a clear indication of whether PSWs are allowed to support patients' activities outside the home; and

"Whereas patient health is best ensured through an active, healthy lifestyle that may involve activities outside the patient's home; and

"Whereas the spirit of community care includes patient access to their community's healthy lifestyle resources;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To enact all necessary statutes that would allow personal support workers and other community care access centre staff to support their patients and clients both in the home and in necessary activities in their communities."

I agree with this petition and will be passing it on to page Cynthia.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

Mr. John Vanthof: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a motion was introduced at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads 'that in the opinion of the House, the operation of off-road vehicles on highways under regulation 316/03 be changed to include side-by-side off-road vehicles, four-seat side-by-side vehicles, and two-up vehicles in order for them to be driven on highways under the same conditions as other off-road/all-terrain vehicles';

"Whereas this motion was passed on November 7, 2013, to amend the Highway Traffic Act 316/03;

"Whereas the economic benefits will have positive impacts on ATV clubs, ATV manufacturers, dealers and rental shops, and will boost revenues to communities promoting this outdoor activity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the Ministry of Transportation to implement this regulation immediately."

I wholeheartedly agree, attach my signature and give it to page William.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Joe Dickson: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the regions of York and Durham are at the final stages of completing an EA"—environmental assessment—"for the YD-WPCP (York Durham water pollution control plant's) outfall; and

"Whereas the regions of York and Durham have chosen as the final solution an alternative which will not address the quantity of total phosphorus (TP) nor soluble reactive phosphorus (SRP) being deposited into Lake Ontario; and

"Whereas Lake Ontario has been identified as the most stressed lake of the Great Lakes in the July/August 2013 issue of Canadian Geographic; and

"Whereas the town of Ajax and PACT POW (Pickering Ajax Citizens Together—Protecting our Water) have documented the excessive algae blooms on the Ajax waterfront with photos and complaints to the region of Durham; and

"Whereas SRP, and indirectly TP, contribute to the growth of algae in Lake Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ask that the government of Ontario require the regions of York and Durham to implement an alternative that will reduce the amount of phosphorus (both TP and SRP) being deposited into Lake Ontario from the YD-WPCP."

I will attach my name to this and pass it to Zachary.

FISHING REGULATIONS

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Fishing Regulations Summary is printed each year by the Ministry of Natural Resources and distributed to recreational fishermen throughout the province to inform them of all the relevant seasons, limits, licence requirements and other regulations; and

"Whereas this valuable document is readily available for anglers to keep in their residence, cottage, truck, boat, trailer or on their person to be fully informed of the current fishing regulations; and

"Whereas the MNR has recently and abruptly drastically reduced the distribution of the Ontario Fishing Regulations Summary such that even major licence issuers and large fishing retailers are limited to one case of regulations per outlet; and

"Whereas anglers do not always have access to the Internet to view online regulations while travelling or in remote areas;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately return the production of the Ontario Fishing Regulations Summary to previous years' quantities such that all anglers have access to a copy and to distribute them accordingly."

I affix my signature in support.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas aggressive dogs are found among all breeds and mixed breeds; and

"Whereas breed-specific legislation has been shown to be an expensive and ineffective approach to dog bite prevention; and

"Whereas problem dog owners are best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible behaviour;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To repeal the breed-specific sections of the Dog Owners' Liability Act (2005) and any related acts, and to instead implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and types."

On behalf of over 1,000 euthanized animals, I'm going to sign this and give it to Amy to be delivered to the table.

DISTRACTED DRIVING

Mr. John Fraser: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas 'texting while driving' is one of the single biggest traffic safety concerns of Ontarians;

"Whereas text messaging is the cause for drivers to be 23 times more likely to be in a motor vehicle accident;

"Whereas talking on a cellphone is found to be four to five times more likely for a driver to be involved in an accident;

"Whereas Ontario is only one of few provinces in Canada where there are no demerit points assessed under the current cellphone/distracted driving legislation currently in place;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To adopt Bill 116 by MPP Balkissoon into law, which calls for each individual guilty of an offence and on conviction to be 'liable to a fine of not less than \$300 and not more than \$700,' in addition to a record of three demerit points for each offence."

I support this petition, am affixing my signature to it and I'm giving it to page Julia.

AIR QUALITY

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition says:

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean Program was implemented as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and vehicle emissions have declined significantly from 1998 to 2010; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

"Whereas from 1999 to 2010 the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and

"Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to eliminate the Drive Clean program."

I support this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Matteya.

1600

DISTRACTED DRIVING

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 'texting while driving' is one of the single biggest traffic safety concerns of Ontarians;

"Whereas text messaging is the cause for drivers to be 23 times more likely to be in a motor vehicle accident;

"Whereas talking on a cellphone is found to be four to five times more likely for a driver to be involved in an accident;

"Whereas Ontario is only one of few provinces in Canada where there are no demerit points assessed under the current cellphone/distracted driving legislation currently in place;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To adopt Bill 116 by MPP Balkissoon into law, which calls for each individual guilty of an offence and on conviction to be 'liable to a fine of not less than \$300 and not more than \$700,' in addition to a record of three demerit points for each offence."

I agree with this petition. I will sign it and send it to the table with page Ana.

ASTHMA

Mr. Jeff Yurek: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas on October 9, 2012, 12-year-old Ryan Gibbons unnecessarily died of an asthma attack at school;

"Whereas one in five students in Ontario schools has asthma; and

"Whereas asthma is a disease that can be controlled; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of Ontario schools to ensure asthma-safe environments;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Education to take measures to protect pupils with asthma by ensuring all school boards put in place asthma-management plans based on province-wide standards."

I agree with the petition. I affix my signature to it.

DISTRACTED DRIVING

Mr. John Fraser: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas 'texting while driving' is the single biggest traffic safety concern of Ontarians;

"Whereas text messaging is the cause for drivers to be 23 times more likely to be in a motor vehicle accident;

"Whereas talking on a cellphone is found to be four to five times more likely for a driver to be involved in an accident;

"Whereas Ontario is one of few provinces in Canada where there are no demerit points assessed under the current cellphone/distracted driving legislation currently in place;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To adopt Bill 116 by MPP Balkissoon into law, which calls for each individual guilty of an offence and on conviction to be 'liable to a fine of not less than \$300 and not more than \$700,' in addition to a record of three demerit points for each offence."

I agree with the petition. I am affixing my signature and giving it to page Spencer.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Petitions? The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very, very much, Speaker. Patience pays off. Anyway, I'm pleased to present a petition from the riding of Durham, which reads as follows:

"Whereas Health Canada approved Esbriet in October 2012 for individuals with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF);

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has declined to list Esbriet on the Ontario drug benefit formulary or reimburse patients through the Exceptional Access Program;

"Whereas Esbriet is the first of its kind to be approved in Canada for the treatment of IPF and will slow the progression of this fatal disease;

"Whereas the high cost of Esbriet is creating financial hardships for many individuals and their families. Only those patients who have access to a private drug plan can afford the cost of this medication, forcing some patients to go without treatment"—and die;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To review and reconsider the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's decision to decline any assistance with Esbriet and consider some form of assistance with the cost of this medication in order to improve the lives of Ontarians with IPF and decrease the cost on the health care system associated with the disease."

I am pleased to sign it on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham.

DISTRACTED DRIVING

Mr. John Fraser: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas 'texting while driving' is one of the single biggest traffic safety concern of Ontarians;

"Whereas text messaging is the cause for drivers to be 23 times more likely to be in a motor vehicle accident;

"Whereas talking on a cellphone is found to be four to five times more likely for a driver to be involved in an accident;

"Whereas Ontario is only one of few provinces in Canada where there are no demerit points assessed under the current cellphone/distracted driving legislation currently in place;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To adopt Bill 116 by MPP Balkissoon into law, which calls for each individual guilty of an offence and on conviction to be 'liable to a fine of not less than \$300 and not more than \$700,' in addition to a record of three demerit points for each offence."

I agree with this petition—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Prince Edward–Hastings.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Todd Smith: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean Program was implemented as a revenue-neutral, temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

"Whereas emissions and vehicle failure rates have dropped dramatically between 1999 and 2010, the Drive Clean program has clearly outlived its usefulness; and

"Whereas Ontario's new Drive Clean tests are recording higher-than-normal failure rates, even in cases where there is nothing wrong with a vehicle's emissions system; and

"Whereas this causes added inconvenience and higher costs for Ontario drivers; and

"Whereas in the case of pre-1998 vehicles, it is becoming increasingly difficult for owners to find an establishment that will provide the 'tailpipe' test for vehicles without the required on-board computer; and

"Whereas the Drive Clean program has generated a profit to the government of \$19 million over the past two years, despite a Supreme Court ruling that revenue-neutral government programs cannot generate a profit, the government is refusing to return this surplus to Ontario taxpayers;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Ontario government to take immediate action to end the Drive Clean program and return accumulated profits to Ontario taxpayers."

I agree with this, and I'm sending it with William to the table.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Laurie Scott: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Premier Kathleen Wynne and the Minister of Energy Bob Chiarelli have publicly stated that there will be no time extensions for large-scale FIT contracts in Ontario, and the Ontario Power Authority CEO, Colin Andersen, has stated the authority is expecting developers to meet contract commitments; and

"Whereas the Premier, minister and the power authority must recognize that damage to our rural area from being under continuing threat by industrial wind turbine developers for three years is serious and unacceptable; and

"Whereas the FIT contracts for the Sumac Ridge, Snowy Ridge, Settlers Landing and Stoneboat projects—all on or near the Oak Ridges Moraine and in the former Manvers township in the city of Kawartha Lakes—have already been extended for one year or longer;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario, the Minister of Energy the Honourable Bob Chiarelli, and the Ontario Power Authority not issue any further time extensions for FIT contracts and, in particular, for the Sumac Ridge, Snowy Ridge, Settlers Landing and Stoneboat projects—before or after expiry of such contracts. We are advised, and we believe, that the 'force majeure' clause in the FIT contracts is completely inapplicable to these projects; accordingly, we respectfully further request the Legislature to instruct the Minister of Energy to adhere to his assurance that extensions will no longer be granted to wind project proponents who have no contractual right to such an extension and who fail to meet their contractual commitments."

Signed by hundreds of people from my riding, and I'll hand it over to page Julia.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The time has expired for petitions.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT ACT (LEAVES TO HELP FAMILIES), 2013 LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI (CONGÉS POUR AIDER LES FAMILLES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 28, 2013, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 21, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family caregiver, critically ill child care and crime-related child death or disappearance leaves of absence / Projet de loi 21, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne le congé familial pour les aidants naturels, le congé pour soins à un enfant gravement malade et le congé en cas de décès ou de disparition d'un enfant dans des circonstances criminelles.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Before I begin, I'd like to say that I'm going to be sharing my time with the honourable member from Durham—the senator from Durham.

I'd also like to take this time—I haven't had an opportunity yet, Speaker—to welcome Julia Brunet, who's a page here, from my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. I know, as a former page myself many years ago—in fact, I think about 22 years ago—that it's an honour to have the privilege to serve as a legislative page. I think all the members in the House can agree that this group of pages is doing a fabulous job.

I was also proud to welcome Julia's family all the way from the Komoka area down to Toronto yesterday and hosted them for lunch and for a tour. So they were happy

to see Julia in action here at Queen's Park. In fact, she was the page captain yesterday.

1610

Speaker, I'm pleased to have been asked to speak to Bill 21 here today. I guess this is our party's lead at third reading, and it's an important bill. It's one that our party supports. Our caucus has been on the record for a while supporting this, and our leader, of course, Tim Hudak.

I'd also like to thank the advocates who have come down to Queen's Park time and time again, talking to MPPs from all three parties, urging everyone to support this bill. I know they also brought a list of recommendations that we took to committee to help improve this bill. Speaker, I will get to this a little later on. I met actually just moments ago with the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters association, who have raised some issues with this bill, and I'll address that throughout my speech.

Bill 21, Employment Standards Amendment Act (Leaves to Help Families) proposes several amendments to the current Employment Standards Act to correlate with some similar changes that the federal government has made to the Canada Labour Code. The PC caucus is glad to see that the government is listening to the concerns that we as a party have presented last session when it was originally introduced as Bill 30, I believe, the Family Caregiver Leave Act. My fellow colleagues have enjoyed the opportunity to speak to Bill 30 at that point, and outlined a number of concerns our caucus had with that piece of legislation.

The original bill did not demonstrate proper consultation with stakeholders or with the small business community, in particular. I'm questioning now how much consultation was also done with the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters association. It failed to demonstrate that there was a real need for these changes to be implemented. However, we can see now they have followed through on making significant changes and improvements to this bill. They did come back with a better bill, and of course they do deserve recognition for that.

With Bill 21, it will help in eliminating the inconsistencies that exist between our federal labour code and the provincial labour laws. As of June of this year, the federal government has started paying out benefits for what is the federal equivalent of the proposed critically ill child care leave act. Additionally, as of January this year, they have also begun implementing grants for 35 weeks for the equivalent of the proposed crime-related child death or disappearance leave.

Bill 21 would not incur any additional costs provincially; it would just protect the job from being terminated. Of course, we're interested in putting families first. I think we all know families or we've had family members who have faced personal health issues, and can certainly understand why this bill is important.

In Ontario, there are currently only two forms of leaves available to workers that are protected under the Employment Standards Act: the family medical leave and the personal emergency leave. Under the current federal Employment Insurance Act, six weeks of employment

insurance benefits may be paid to eligible employees under this leave. The family medical leave is an unpaid job-protected leave of up to eight weeks within a 26-week period. In order to be eligible, a qualified health practitioner must issue a certificate stating that an individual to be cared for has a serious medical condition and has a significant risk of death occurring within a period of 26 weeks. The personal emergency leave gives some employees the right to take up to 10 days of unpaid job-protected leave each year due to injuries, illnesses and certain other emergencies or urgent matters. This type of leave would only be eligible for individuals who work for a company that regularly employs more than 50 employees.

Bill 21 includes the introduction of new types of leaves: the family caregiver leave for up to eight weeks unpaid per year, the critically ill child care leave for up to 37 weeks for parents caring for a critically ill child, and a crime-related death or disappearance leave of up to 104 weeks for employees whose child dies as a result of a crime, or up to 52 weeks for employees whose child disappears as a result of a crime. The family caregiver leave mirrors the family medical leave in many ways; however, it does not include the provision of significant risk of death within a 26-week period.

Speaker, it's important that this bill brings Ontario's legislation in line with the federal legislation that was passed some time ago. We would like to see some important flexibility put into this program because it is fairly restrictive in the time frames, and I believe some of this was addressed at committee. One aspect of this bill is to keep seniors in their homes and allow that to happen. Of course, giving people the opportunity to take a leave from their job to care for a loved one—as I said, we've all had family members or friends of our families who have had to face health issues and challenges on that front.

I will say that, as I said earlier, I met with the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters association, who have raised some issues with this, particularly around the days off. It could impact production in any manufacturing facility. I'm hoping that the government will take that into account and work with them to ensure that it's a smooth transition for this bill to take effect.

Of course, when we talk about manufacturing, I can tell you, as a former three-term municipal councillor, a small business owner myself, and now an MPP from southwestern Ontario, I've seen first-hand what happens when government treats economic development as an afterthought. In fact, the closed plants, lost jobs and families struggling to survive are the inevitable outcomes of runaway power costs, overregulation and a failure to understand what entrepreneurs need to succeed and what manufacturers need to succeed, and Bill 21 impacts manufacturers in the province of Ontario.

Ontario's manufacturers require a champion who will ensure that power rates are competitive, that the provincial transportation system works well, that our schools and colleges educate people for the workplace of the 21st

century and that the regulations that government imposes encourage competition and do not deter it. Right now, we don't have those conditions here in Ontario. We've heard the long-term energy plan that was released yesterday that surely is going to kill more jobs in the province of Ontario and make life more unaffordable for seniors and for families impacted by Bill 21, who have loved ones who are sick. But we just don't have those conditions, and our towns and cities are paying that price.

Since 2003, it's been said many, many times, Ontario has lost over 300,000 manufacturing jobs, at the same time adding over 300,000 government workers to the payroll. Of course, taxpayers simply cannot afford to pay that cost and that burden of an extra 300,000 government workers.

But we can't afford to simply give up and pretend that Ontario can thrive without a strong manufacturing sector, because it can't. Talking about Bill 21 here today and having the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters association here is good timing. They're going to be hosting the MPPs here at Queen's Park later on today, so I know we'll be talking about Bill 21 with them.

But Speaker, there is room for optimism on the manufacturing side. Major Ontario companies—Magna is a good example—are innovative market leaders. Smaller Ontario companies lead in their own sectors in areas as diverse as cranes, health care devices, liquid rubber and office floor tiles.

The current government has erected a number of barriers to new jobs, including layers of unnecessary red tape and one of the highest costs of government in North America. In fact, it's a high-cost jurisdiction to do business in. I think the government really has to listen to the warning signs that are out there—of course, they've been going on for a long time now—but we can't put barriers in front of businesses and in front of job creators. I urge the government just to be careful with these bills that they are bringing forward.

1620

In the United States, we are seeing major corporations bring home production from abroad, because they need highly skilled workers and because they want to produce closer to their customers.

Even Chinese companies are starting to make their products in North America.

In Ontario, we need a dedicated effort to repatriate companies back to the province of Ontario, to seek out and help facilitate companies to relocate and return home.

There is great opportunity for Ontario, Speaker, but we are competing directly with other provinces and US states, many of which already have the flexible labour markets, lower power rates and streamlined business regulations that, of course, our leader, Tim Hudak, and our caucus have long been advocating for.

Getting back to the details of Bill 21, I think that the bill speaks to the compassion that members of this Legislature have for the people we all represent. Whatever party we're with, we really feel for those families strug-

gling with loved ones who are ill. Honestly, I think there's not a person here who wouldn't agree with that kind of initiative and who wouldn't agree with that plan, as long as it's a well-thought-out plan that's not going to be harmful on the job creation side.

When a person has an ill child or family member, we all think of them. We can sympathize with the stress that they are under. We hope every child is going to live a happy and healthy life, but that's not always the case. I can tell you, as a new father myself, it's something I worry about every day. You pray that your child is going to remain healthy, but we know, sadly, that's not always the case.

In these circumstances, it is important for all of us to show that type of compassion and understanding for that family and the issues that they are confronted with.

It's good to see that we are giving more respect to family members who unselfishly give up their time to care for a family member, and that we are working to provide a level of support for them to do so. A streamlined piece of legislation is something we can support; one that eliminates inconsistencies and duplications is key.

With my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex being largely rural, I'm sure this will have a lot of support, especially where people have to drive longer distances to get to hospitals and health care centres in order to get the treatment needed.

For an aging or critically ill person, it makes a lot of sense to have family members around to care for them, particularly because the reality is that there is a lack of long-term-care beds in this province. I know it's something that we're faced with in our constituency offices throughout the riding. Whether it's in Forest or Glencoe, Strathroy or Wallaceburg, our constituency assistants get calls all the time. They're put on waiting lists for long-term-care beds, and it's a real concern here in the province of Ontario.

I continue to hear from my constituents about their frustration over the decline in front-line services that enable these people to care for their family at home. With budgets getting tighter, the front line seems to be the one area that is affected the most, instead of the already overly bloated bureaucracy. This reminds me, of course, of what has happened in my riding with the three hospitals—Strathroy, Four Counties in Newbury, and the Sydenham hospital in Wallaceburg.

To highlight front-line health care cuts, I can highlight the Sydenham hospital in Wallaceburg, that had 28 beds closed a couple of weeks ago. It's a real loss to that community—I believe it was since 1921. I raised money for that hospital. That community built the hospital. It's a wonderful hospital, a very important part of the Wallaceburg and Kent county community.

I think it's a shame when front-line services are cut and what replaces front-line services is more government bureaucracy. I look at the LHINs: They're sucking hundreds of millions of dollars out of front-line health care services right across the province, just for bureau-

crats. The CCACs are another good example of millions and millions of dollars being wasted.

Again, at Strathroy hospital, one of the floors has been closed. Four Counties hospital, I think, back around 1972, in that time frame, had about 40 or 44 beds. It's down a lot now; I think about a quarter of that is remaining today. So I think we've got to really pay attention to where the health care dollars are going and ensure that the money is going to the patients, to the front-line services. That is key, Speaker.

Of course, speaking of health care, we had the issue raised over the last couple of days of Ornge and more waste and, more than anything, just more mismanagement at Ornge and more mismanagement on the part of this government, the Premier and the health minister. I mean, Chris Mazza getting paid by the taxpayers, again after getting an extra \$10 million that we just found out about—this is just crazy. It's no way to run a government, Speaker, especially after eHealth and a couple of gas plant cancellations of \$1.1 billion. I can see why the people of Ontario have lost faith in this Premier, much like they did under the former Premier, Dalton McGuinty. And I think the LHINs just add to that: more waste in the health care system. People know that money is scarce today here in Ontario. I think the government has spent Ontario into a deep hole, and people know that that money should be going to front-line patient care.

But again, Speaker, back to Bill 21: Additionally, when dealing with the loss or disappearance of a child, it's time that it finally gets recognized as it does in Bill 21. During this heartbreaking period of time for any parent who might end up in this situation, providing them time is not only compassionate, but it's absolutely the right thing to do, and that's why our party has been very supportive of this government's piece of legislation.

This bill, as I said, which we are supporting, is important to many people in the province of Ontario, but there are major challenges that we have to address with this sitting of this Legislature. We've said that we need to clear the decks. Our leader, Tim Hudak, has been clear on that, that we need to get focused on really what matters in Ontario right now, especially after we've heard of the Heinz closure—800 jobs lost there.

But I would encourage this government to really tackle the deficit and the jobs crisis that we have here in Ontario today, and the Liberal members have to agree with me that everywhere you go, people are concerned about providing food for their families, having that job so they can care for their loved ones.

This legislation, obviously, serves an important part of this sitting. However, as I said, there are many, many huge issues that are facing the province of Ontario. When we talk about a million people not working in the province of Ontario, that's a scary figure, Speaker—and 300,000 manufacturing jobs lost. Ontario's wage growth is dead last in Canada. So you talk about the middle class being gutted; it's actually happening right now in front of us. That's why the crisis requires urgent action by this government, and unfortunately—and, you know, we saw it a number of times during question period, Speaker. I

don't think the Premier is up to the job, up to the task of dealing with the jobs and debt crisis in the province of Ontario. I mean, this is what everyone is talking about, and that has increased, the discussion about the jobs crisis, since the long-term energy plan came out yesterday. I mean, you just have to read all of the newspapers, the letters to the editors. All MPPs, I'm sure, have received emails and calls from their constituents. They don't know how the heck they're going to be able to afford an extra \$500 a year, because their hydro bills are going up.

Interjection.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: And, yes, I heard members saying that it's \$444 a year that they're going up. I know there's a bit of debate about that, but some members say it's \$444 a year and some say it's \$500. But I can tell you, when it comes to hydro bills, I think of a small business person in my riding who owns a grocery store, a Foodland, in a small town, and his hydro bill was \$8,500 a month a couple of years ago. That's \$8,500 a month. We all know the grocery business has pretty fine margins, and his bill now is \$10,000 a month.

1630

Mr. John Fraser: Point of order: He's not speaking to the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Yes, I'd like to remind the member to contain his remarks to the bill.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you, Speaker. I actually think I am speaking to the bill. When we talk about Bill 21, helping families in need, providing time to spend with loved ones who are going through challenges, there are lots of challenges happening out there, Speaker, and I just want to finish this story on the grocery store owner because I think it highlights what we're going through here in Ontario.

This person is paying \$10,000 a month in hydro costs. This is after putting in T8 light bulbs, the energy-efficient light bulbs, and putting new compressors in his coolers, and the bills are still going up. Yesterday, what the energy minister—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Yes, point of order.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I just want to make reference to standing order 23(b), "directs his or her speech to other matters" that are not the topic of the bill. I just want to bring that to your attention, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I would remind the member to contain his remarks to the bill under discussion.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: It's a good story, Monte.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Yes, you're right. The minister said it is a good story, but it's a sad story and it's a story that we're hearing all across the province.

Bill 21, the Employment Standards Amendment Act (Leaves to Help Families), proposes several amendments to the current Employment Standards Act to correlate with some similar changes that the federal government has made to the Canada Labour Code.

Again, I say that we're supporting this bill. We're supporting the government's bill, but in turn, for the support of Bill 21 and other bills, we're asking the government to bring forward legislation that's going to deal with the jobs and debt crisis. I think I am speaking to Bill 21 throughout my remarks because we've allowed the government to clear the decks. Tim Hudak and the PC caucus have allowed this legislation to get through and to clear the decks so we can focus on the priorities.

Again, I think that we need to always show a compassionate side for our loved ones, for our families. As I said earlier, I'm a father, and I pray every day that my daughter stays healthy, as all do who are parents.

Speaker, the unemployment rate in Ontario is unacceptably high, at around 8% in many regions. In fact, down in southwestern Ontario it's closer to 10%. The deficit this year is going to ring in, I believe, at somewhere around the \$12-billion range. The provincial debt is going up \$20 billion this year alone, from \$253 billion to \$273 billion, having doubled under the tenure of this government. Perhaps the government could incorporate some additional PC proposals to get this province back on track.

Again, just to reiterate, we're supporting Bill 21. We've agreed to a number of pieces of legislation in order to clear the decks to get on with the priorities that Ontarians have, and that is to create jobs in Ontario and get the books balanced in Ontario.

We need to eliminate the deficit and bring the debt down, yet the government is still continuing to spend, spend, spend. I speak about Bill 21 being a compassionate bill, and it is. But running these massive deficits is robbing future generations. It's taking away important services that we could be providing for future generations, and I think that's wrong. In fact, if I was a government member, I really could not sleep at night, knowing that they're adding \$20 billion a year to the provincial debt. Quite frankly, I think that's criminal, Speaker. It should not be allowed to happen here in this province.

To ensure there is a health care system to even provide care for those who experience health care emergencies, and to have jobs for their loved ones to take a leave from, we have to get our fiscal house in order and our economic fundamentals right, and again this is clearly speaking to Bill 21.

Additionally, transparency is required in these discussions and in these bills. I think it's important that the Ministry of Labour look at that transparency throughout the whole labour portfolio, especially in developing all of their labour legislation. This is something that should be done with other legislation with respect to things like—I think a good one, and an important one when it comes to government unions in particular, is government union financial disclosure. We know that that has changed or is changing at the federal level; there's a bill, I believe, that's passing through.

Again, Bill 21 is a labour bill, and I think there are other parts of the labour portfolio that need to be looked at, but—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Just a moment. Yes?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I just want to rise again on a point of order and make reference to you, Madam Speaker, of the relevant section of the standing orders, 23(b), when the member directs his or her speech to matters other than the topic of the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd remind the member to keep his remarks relevant to the bill under discussion.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Well, Speaker, again, I wish the member from Peterborough would actually listen to my remarks. Bill 21 was introduced by the Minister of Labour. There are other issues in that ministry that need to be dealt with, and—

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Yes, but we're not talking about those. We're talking about this bill.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I am speaking to Bill 21. When we talk about a massive debt that you—you're part of a government that is raising the—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Excuse me. I must remind you to speak through the Chair.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Speaker, through you to the members opposite, I just don't understand why the Liberals are so opposed to us talking about some fiscal sanity around this place. Just because, in the last 10 years, they have spent Ontario into oblivion, I think that they should be respectful in this debate. We are having a respectful debate. I listened to the Minister of Labour's lead on this bill, and I think we should have respect on all sides of the House.

We'd like to see this bill through, as I said. Tim Hudak took the lead and I think showed what strong leadership is, and that is to clear the deck to get focused on the priorities here in Ontario. We're pleased that this legislation actually eliminates inconsistencies between the federal labour code and provincial labour laws instead of creating inconsistencies.

Everyone's goal is the same. Many have elderly family members at home, and we need the flexibility ourselves to be able to keep them at home, because that's where they want to be. I think we can all agree, regardless of the partisan stripe, that our loved ones would like to remain at home, in particular our seniors. I think they're happiest there, and it's in our best interests if we can keep them in good health and give them the type of life that they want to lead.

Our leader, Tim Hudak, and the PC caucus support this bill. To be very clear, compassion is not something unique to any party here in this Legislature. I believe each of us in this room is in support of helping those in our society and our communities—the most vulnerable. There shouldn't be any doubt about that. It's about how we go about doing it and implementing the public policies to address the challenges we face.

We need to have a government in this province that is committed to managing costs and recognizing where there are savings that can be realized. We've already identified those areas in our health care system, and do

need to continue looking at how we can adapt our approaches when it comes to front-line health care services.

Before I turn it over to the honourable member from Durham, I just want to reiterate the importance of dealing with the priorities of Ontarians today; that is, getting the books balanced in Ontario so that we can provide health care services in the future and get the money to the front-line patient care. Let's cut administration and cut bureaucracy here in Ontario.

In closing, I just want to highlight that I think for me, since I've been elected for two years now, the waste and administration—I know there was a hospital CEO in the province of Ontario a number of years ago, and it came to light in the *London Free Press*, I believe, who was getting paid somewhere around \$900,000 a year. The hospital was paying for a Lexus for him. They were paying for a financial investor for him. Then it came to light that he ended up getting paid over \$1 million for a retention bonus.

1640

I think that highlights the frustration that people have here in the province of Ontario. Then again, even more than that, the LHINs—hundreds of millions of dollars are going into the LHINs and the CCACs, of course.

I think the resources are scarce. We have to get our house in order so we can be compassionate to future generations here in the province of Ontario.

Speaker, in closing, we will continue to call upon the government to introduce legislation to deal with the huge challenges facing the province, and we will be prepared to debate those too.

With that, I'll close and turn it over to my honourable colleague from Durham.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's truly an honour to follow the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, our critic on this file, the critic of labour, a very capable person who knows both sides of the question of employment and employment rules, having worked in business and being part owner in a business, so he knows how good and how important it is to treat employees fairly and equitably.

This really does come down to fairness, because it's fairness for those families who have children—or parents, for that matter, with children—who may be ill. We need to be compassionate and realize that today.

The most important thing we should do in Ontario—and I think all members would agree with this: The most important thing we could do is create the environment where there are jobs for young people, there are jobs for people who are in transition, there are jobs in Ontario.

Our leader, Tim Hudak, starts almost every day giving us a pep talk, a rally talk, and saying it's all about the economy and jobs, and if we could just get that working again, there would be enough for everyone. "Sustainability" is defined as enough for everyone forever. Today, our definition in Ontario is almost the opposite. We have the highest unemployment: the largest province in Canada, running with a very high chronic unemployment rate for the last four or five years.

Now we're introducing another standard. The standard itself is really copying, as my colleague the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex mentioned—actually, he mentioned the federal discussion, and the legislation there does cover a number of these concerns.

Initially, in fairness to the government, this government introduced the bill on March 5, 2013. It was debated several times in second reading, in which I participated and most members here participated and raised concerns. They were valid concerns.

In fairness, and with all due respect to the government itself, they did amend the bill, and I've got the most recent copy here. This is my original copy. There are a few notes; it's a bit messy. There's the original one of March 5.

I know exactly what was said during the debates by the member from Timmins-James Bay on September 11 and the member from Burlington on the 12th, and the comments they made in their 20-minute responses to Bill 21.

Impressively, the bill went to committee in late September. It came out of committee, and on November 7, the bill, as amended, was reported to the House. Now we're in third reading. The bill has been amended.

I should say this: I'm going to go through some of the sections of the bill that, at the beginning, were troubling. Most members on this side—the government was convinced they had it right, but in fact, one of the largest issues came up in the very first section of the bill, and it was under—I'm just looking here at the changes.

Section 49.3: That section was amended. It was on a qualified practitioner, those persons who can issue the validity or the medical statement that says this condition is worthy of having the support for a critically ill child.

There's another section here, and I'll read some of those into the record for the public who may be following this, those HR people who may be interested. It's the fact that each of the leaves—if you took a day off, for instance, to take your ill loved one with maybe cancer for a medical appointment, you had to take the whole week off. They've amended that, and I give them full credit for amending it, because it made absolutely no sense, and there's some evidence there that they did listen to us. I'm surprised—I should say that—that they did listen, but nonetheless they did.

I think, for the viewer here today, this is important. The member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex was always trying to make the full and complete argument about the appropriateness in the timing in the economy of Ontario. In the context of that, he introduced a few flashpoints. I'd call them controversial comments. I've never done that myself, but there are occasions when it's required to bring attention to certain issues. I would say that I was very impressed.

In the same context of Bill 21—this does apply, so I'm qualifying it. This is kind of a neutral commentary by the eminently respected Roger Martin, who's the chair of the Ontario Task Force on Competitiveness, Productivity and Economic Growth. Who is more qualified to talk about

Ontario and how we're doing? If a person wanted to look at a really good article, there was one on the 28th, from the Toronto Star—kind of the Liberal briefing notes, we call them—"Keys to Unlocking the Full Force of Ontario's Economy." Here it is, Roger Martin, speaking in the Toronto Star, and he brings up certain things. He says, "From our talented people to the economic potential of the Ring of Fire or our agri-food sector, there is no shortage of causes for optimism." He goes on to say that that's not really the case. The Ring of Fire: Cliffs walked out. There goes northern Ontario's economy.

Really, this is the point here. We set this nice compassionate climate for making sure that there's leave in the case of critically ill children or children who have been abducted and for family caregivers themselves, and when we talk about that, you will find, I would put to you, Madam Speaker, unanimous agreement that that is the case. I've listened to almost all the debates. In the debate from the member from Essex on November 28, he made a very compassionate statement in here, revealing how this kind of thing affected his life when his older brother, I believe, broke his neck or the fourth vertebrae and was quadriplegic and how his family had to come to the rescue. This bill is important, and I think the federal government's initiative and their legislation on this caregiver leave is the way to go. Those are the people who want to be there. They have no choice but to be there, especially a parent with a sick child.

Myself being a parent of—my wife and I had five children. There were many occasions when she as a teacher had to give up her time. As an employee in an assembly-type environment, it was harder for me to give up time. If I look back, I would say I probably should have taken more time.

But one of the sections in the bill here that the public should know about is probably one of the more troubling sections, not from the point of view of not supporting the bill. Critically ill care leave is added to the act, and it's under section 49.4. For an employee who has at least been employed for six consecutive weeks, to provide the care to support a critically ill child, entitlement to a critically-ill-child-care leave is in addition to any entitlement to family medical leave under section 49.1. The family care leave in this section would provide for, I believe, 37 weeks, and that's probably appropriate. If you had a critically ill child—it could be serious cancer or organ transplant or even more complicated, but 37 weeks to provide care and support for a critically ill child. That's drawn out in legislation.

If you really think about it, that may not be enough, but here's the issue: There are not five cents in this bill—this is actually downloading, and I want to be straightforward about this. I would agree that the parent would probably have no choice if it was their child, but could they afford to take 37 weeks off?

Tell the whole story: You're out of a job, you have a sick child, you can't pay the rent, and you can't put gas in the car. Where's Dalton McGuinty or Kathleen Wynne—pardon me—where's the Premier now?

They've got to take credit for the holes and the gaps in this thing. They brought it up. It's feel-good. I understand that. We are all compassionate. Don't say that we're not. We're bringing up the realistic perspective of this. There isn't one nickel of money in it.

1650

It's like the minimum wage discussion, if you want to really be honest. Everybody is—I'm getting letters; you're all getting letters—getting letters about increasing the minimum wage. The Premier will probably bring that in. It's not one nickel of her money, you know. If not, in some respects there is a little element of blaming the federal government in this bill as well. This is the problem here. Why don't they—always talking about working Kumbaya, collaboratively.

I put to you, whether it's Roger Martin or whoever else is commenting on these things, let's look at the state of the economy today. If you really want to help, the first and most important thing is to give people the hope and opportunity for a job and the security that goes with that. A lot of illness is caused by people who have lost their jobs and become depressed and dysfunctional, and that's part of what is really behind all of where we are in the economy of Ontario. Once you've been kicked down and kicked in the teeth, it's hard to get up again and get on your feet.

Going on, I'm trying to tie this into my colleague's former remarks about where we are in the province of Ontario. There's a really excellent report. It's a report put out by our critic in finance: Fedeli Focus on Finance, Ontario's fall economic statement. And he goes on—the member from Nipissing is here, so I'm not plagiarizing. This report is available online. It's worthy of—I won't say it's F-OF, this Focus on Finance; it's FOF; pardon me.

There was another article. These are bringing in other third party commentaries that I think are worthy of attention. This one is in the National Post. It's a fairly civilized copy here. This is by Jack Mintz, who's the Palmer Chair of the School of Public Policy at the University of Calgary. He's talking about a number of public policy discussions ongoing. But he's going to say here, talking about the problem: "The province has to borrow money for capital, thereby harming" their financial positions. He goes on to say, "A much bigger fiscal credibility problem faces Canada's two largest provinces. Ontario promises to balance its budget by 2018 but it is far from clear that there is any plan to do so. The government is hesitant to cut spending, leaving" it only up to the taxpayer. There's another academic telling you the true story.

We know right now that we had the long-term energy plan yesterday. We call it the short-term energy plan. It's short-term because there's just enough in there to get them through to the next election without telling the whole story. They have the most expensive energy in North America. Businesses are leaving here, not just Cliffs with the Ring of Fire, but it does apply to this sector of Bill 21.

Hon. Jeff Leal: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: Even though I'm always impressed with the entertainment from the member from Durham—

Mr. John O'Toole: Entertainment? It's the truth.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I must refer you to—standing order section 23(b), that talks about when a member "directs his or her speech to matters other than" the bill that's currently debated. So I seek your guidance, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you very much. I would remind the member that he should restrict his remarks to those related to the bill under discussion.

Mr. John O'Toole: I respect the observation. That proves they were paying attention.

But anyway, here's the issue: I'm really going to say, at the end of it, right now I'm not happy with the economy. I think Bill 21 does nothing about jobs and the economy. They introduced a bill—they're all good; they're all good things. Banning tanning beds: I don't have a problem with that, but there are more important issues. We have the highest unemployment.

I'm going to go on to a couple more sections, because in the amendment sections, I told you earlier that I would reread into the record some of the changes. I think they've redefined, under section 49.4, "child." In the older section, the child was described differently; a child means "step-child, foster child or child who is under legal guardianship, and who is under 18 years of age; ('enfant')." It used to be not fully described. So I think that was a good amendment. It's probably a drafting error more than anything that was put in at a political level.

It goes on to say, a qualified practitioner "means a person"—now there's this nuance of change in this section. This is section 49.4(1)(a). It says, "a person who is qualified to practise as a physician, a registered nurse or a psychologist under the laws of the jurisdiction in which care or treatment is provided to the individual described in subsection (4), or

"(b) in the prescribed circumstances, a member of a prescribed class of health practitioners;"

So in the previous section it didn't really extend it to the nursing assistant or the PSW, and that's kind of what this does, finding a more affordable option for providing a qualified person who would give you the letter that says the child is actually sick.

There's another thing here. It's quite an onerous bill, but Bill 21, in the very short time I have left—I wish I had the hour to speak; it would have been more—

Hon. Jeff Leal: I move unanimous consent to—

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes.

Now, this is quite interesting. I know the general public would be interested in this as well. This is section 49.5. See, a lot of people don't like this, the nuances of these pieces of legislation. Section 49.5 creates crime-related child death or disappearance leave, and it's added to the act. Under section 49.5, an employee who has been employed by their employer for at least six months—so you've got to be at the place of employment for six

months to be entitled to a certain leave without pay if the child of the employee dies or disappears and it is probable, considering the circumstances, that the child died, or—under a certain section. It's 49.5.

"If the employee is charged with the crime or if it is probable, considering the circumstances, that the child was a party to the crime"—but I'm going on here. If the parent was involved or wasn't involved with the loss of the child, where they find the child—if the child was found, they would get 52 weeks' leave. That's a year off. I don't know. I think they're going to be very upset.

Now, here's the real implication. If, for instance, they were a millwright or an electrician and they were off for a year—they probably have every good reason. They're going to be unemployed, first. Secondly, the employer—not that I'm always on their side—could be a small shop, five or six people. They have to get the millwright.

Now, if they're feeling compassionate, they're probably helping out the other employee, too—I would hope that the federal government would click in with some of the unemployment insurance benefits—and have to hire and probably retrain this particular person in the factory that was there. So there's a cost there to everyone involved. There is definitely a cost. Nothing's happening here.

It goes on to say if the child was actually found no longer alive, they'd get 104 weeks. Now, there's a much bigger problem here. That's two years off, and there's probably court time involved and all that, depending on the circumstances.

There's a lot in this bill where the government isn't putting any money on the table. Transitions for two years—to have no income and a child who has been abducted, potentially killed—I'm not a member of the government, but I'm not allowing them to walk around acting as if they changed the world, and they didn't put five cents on the table. Yet in Ontario, we're running a deficit of \$14 billion. Now it's \$15 billion, because the Minister of Energy said today that he has not put in his long-term energy plan the \$1 billion lost on the gas plants.

Ontario's in trouble, and trouble—that's when people are going to be off work. They're going to be depressed. They're going to be sick—sick and tired.

I think half of it—Bill 21 doesn't go near far enough—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Madam Speaker, I just want to bring to your attention the standing orders again. Section 23, subsection (b): "directs his or her speech to matters other than" are being debated. If we want to have a debate about the energy act, well, let's have a special debate on the energy act—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you.

The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you, the member from Peterborough, the Minister of Rural Affairs, I believe it is—yes, rural affairs. The Premier has the agricultural part of it.

I think they would admit, though, there needs to be a more wholesome debate on the energy plan. There were three questions asked, I think two or three by the NDP as well. So he's touched on it. I didn't divert it. He diverted my attention, and I'm easily distracted; I understand that.

1700

I thought the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex made a very impassioned plea for patience, civility and looking at having some compassion for the people of Ontario. I would say this: I have given them credit, in fairness. I have given credit, because I did say they did amend a couple of sections in a favourable way. I also said that we, with some consideration, will support this bill on third reading, but there's more that needs to be done. Where are their priorities? Would you spend \$1 billion moving gas plants for political reasons or give some help to these people in transition who have been out of work for two years?

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: That's what's—you brought the bill up. Don't point the finger at the federal—don't blame Jim Flaherty. Don't blame Tim Hudak. We would have had a stronger economy. Our whole plan is about recovering Ontario.

I'm anxious to hear what people say in the two-minute responses because I know myself that the real challenge here in Ontario—if the people of Ontario just knew. This is what the Wall Street Journal said. Am I allowed to bring this forward? No, I won't. I won't go down that road.

I have a small article here where the Minister of Finance, Mr. Sousa, spoke.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: See, I cannot bring relevant information to the debate. That's what's missing.

Bill 21, I believe—as I said before, it's third reading. We understand it has been to committee. We understand it has been amended. Premier Wynne, in all—here's what it sounds like to me: "See what we've done for you lately." Well, I'm putting on the table that they haven't done anything. A good employer would be there for the good employee as well. Now they've legislated good behaviour and they're going to take credit for it. It's like the minimum wage. They're going to say, "We're going to increase it to \$13" to take the votes away from Andrea Horwath and take credit for it.

Here's the point: But who pays for it? That's the issue here. The employer pays, and the employer says that their payroll is, say, \$10,000 a week. The payroll ain't changing. There are just going to be fewer people sharing it. That's how it works. I've talked to all of the small businesses.

This case here—I want a response in the two minutes, perhaps from the member from Peterborough. Let's take an example of a small restaurant in my riding. I can think of the people now, Zante Restaurant: family-run, family-committed, working hard, paying their taxes, playing by the rules. All of a sudden, bang, somebody gets sick. What do they do? They've got to replace the person.

Maybe they have to train the person. Fortunately, they changed the rule where they had to take the whole week off.

But let's say that person isn't a family member. The person is an employee. That isn't covered under here. That only has to be a family member, not an employee. That's why I think, quite honestly, when you look at it, some other family is going to be without the money, and that young waitress or cook who's off sick—no pay, living in the apartment.

Look, it sounds good, but on deeper inquiry I find it doesn't do what it says. It's downloading onto the people who are sick and out of work. That's the true test of this whole thing. I would be wondering if there's any economy left to even give them any support, because you're spending money on stuff that isn't necessary, and you should be spending money on stuff like the question that was asked on a drug for a young family today. There's a family disrupted by illness. They won't even help with the drug, yet that very drug is covered in other provinces.

Now they're going to give them time off. Time off, all right. They're probably going to die. This woman potentially will die, and I'm not saying the drug would save the life, nor am I blaming the minister. She's saying, "That's an independent process. I can't do a thing." The Minister of Health in Ontario would usually stand up on those issues and find out—it was evidence-based, but the evidence base is in, in that particular case. Other provinces have approved it. Health Canada has approved it. Why are they denying it to some people?

This case does relate to Bill 21, which is talking about the spouse who's off with an illness—brain cancer, in this case, I think, with Mr. Chudleigh's constituent with two children, who has been here, who has talked to the minister.

Not to make it embarrassing or to blame, but you can't have it both ways. You can't claim that you have the corner on compassion and somehow we don't. I think at the end of the day, if you worked with a bit more spirit of co-operation, you would find that not just Tim Hudak but the entire team on this side is as compassionate as anyone on the other side. But when you think you're somehow higher and mightier and are, without much accountability, squandering money on some of the outrageous things like Ornge helicopters and the gas plants, all that stuff, you aren't doing the real serious stuff about the jobs and the economy and protecting jobs in the case of family members that may be sick.

On this bill, I did want to speak and put my emotive feelings on the record. In the context of our critic, who's a young fellow, I think of my children who work in other countries. I know that she has a child that's not feeling well at times. She's a teacher in England, and she gets zero time. I can't believe it; the coverage there is just pathetic. But in Ontario, we do want a strong economy to provide for our children and for our families, and this bill—the discussion itself is good; it acknowledges, at least.

My final remarks are about something that's related. Earlier today, I met with Linda Sunderland and some other people from Hospice Palliative Care Ontario. This is very relevant to this debate. Those members, almost all without exception, were volunteers. I know them in my riding talking about end-of-life care and the most suitable thing. They're looking for an ear from the government in an era where we have an aging population, families that are stressed to the max because both people have to work to afford all the stuff in society today, and you have aging parents that are fading. I would hope that this bill does something in that respect, but more importantly I want to thank the people from Hospice Palliative Care Ontario for bringing the message to us today. Some members, I'm sure, met with them. We're looking for the minister to pay attention to them and allocate some resources for this emerging and serious concern about palliative and end-of-life care in Ontario today.

I'm going to leave a few minutes of the time I have. I tried to use as much of the time—and I thank the member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, our critic on this file, for allowing me the opportunity to share the time with him and compliment some of the things he has done and the work he has done on this bill to make it better.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm happy to comment on Bill 121, the Employment Standards Amendment Act (Leaves to Help Families). Speaker, we've debated this bill for quite a while in the House. It seems like everyone agrees that this bill is a good idea, that when there's a family member who's ill, generally people want to be by that family member's side. So to have that option of having your employer give you that time off is a good thing.

When it went to committee, I see that there's one very good amendment in there that I had originally thought was really important. Originally, the bill came through, and it was a requirement that you would take the three weeks off in the year as one lump, in a block, to look after your loved one. But the reality of illness is that it's not going to happen just for three weeks. Someone could need assistance from a family member to take them to an appointment for a couple of days or a couple of afternoons during the week, or just a week's time. So I see that in committee the real work was done on this bill, and the opposition parties came together. The NDP and the Tories came together in agreement to see that that provision was in there, because it needs to work for the people who are going to use it.

There was debate that it's not going to work for the employer; it's going to be harder for the employer. But I think most employers would actually prefer someone taking the time in small increments, because that's more workable than three weeks, where you've got an absent employee for three weeks, and you've got to fill that gap. If it's an afternoon or a couple of days or a week, and it's spread out over the year or a few months, that, to me, seems to work for the employer and the employee. So I

was glad to see we could work in committee with that amendment.

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The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions.

Mr. John Fraser: I'm pleased to respond to the members from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and Durham. I'm glad this is something we can all agree on. That's what we've all been saying. This bill is compassionate. It speaks to what families need in a time of crisis. It also protects their jobs, especially for those in precarious employment.

I want to point out: The member from Oshawa said this bill had nothing to do with jobs. Well, in fact, it does protect people's jobs. It protects their employment. An employer cannot dismiss them based on the fact that they have to care for an ill loved one. I think that's an important thing to remember.

As a second point, I'm not sure whether the member from Oshawa supports this or doesn't support it—because describing it as a Kumbaya feel-good bill, I think, is really not doing a service to something we've accomplished together. The member did acknowledge that, so I'm not sure which side he's standing on.

With respect to the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, I know that he understands how important this is to families. I had the opportunity to meet him and his wife, Kate, with their new addition last night, and I know that he would have that kind of compassion as an employer.

I want to point out two things, though, that the member did mention. The hydro is not 500 additional dollars; it's \$500 in savings as to what originally was projected. And it's not \$20 billion to the deficit each year—but I want to actually give him some perspective on the deficit.

We have a ledger sheet here that we have to watch that's called the provincial budget. There are also 13 million ledger sheets in Ontario, and on those ledger sheets are the things that families count on, like health care, like investment in jobs, like investment in the auto sector, which you guys—the Conservative Party, the party across—voted against. That's what they depend on, and we don't see that ledger sheet clearly. It isn't put to us here—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you.

Further comments. The member for Nipissing.

Applause.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you—oh, that wasn't for me.

Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak. I want to continue on with what the member from Ottawa South was talking about, and that's really having the funds to do the things that are important to people in Ontario.

I have just sent over the latest Fedeli Focus on Finance to the minister, for him to have a perusal. You'll see between that issue, which talked about your fall economic statement, and issue number 2—which are all available

on fedeli.com, by the way; you can download them—it talked about why Ontario's spiralling debt matters.

Really, what happens with this spiralling debt and the deficit is that that takes money away from programs that are important. This year alone, we are going to see \$9.2 billion in deficit and \$10.4 billion in interest. That's almost \$20 billion that will be added to our debt this year. That's money that can't be spent on health, front-line health care, education—the things that are important to us, and the things that are important to the rest of Ontario.

That's why we absolutely need to be focused on our finances. We need to have a jobs plan from the other side. We have 14 white papers, soon to be 15 white papers—200 pages of bold ideas to put people back to work in Ontario, ideas that will help in northern Ontario, where I live, in North Bay, in Nipissing riding. These bold ideas—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you.

The member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: I think there should be a new show on TV: Meet the Fedelis.

Anyway, with all due respect, I do see in the bill that our friends from the official opposition and us tagged up to—apparently the Liberals didn't like the one-week-only requirement, and we teamed up to allow that to be expanded to more than one week. That's an interesting concept, that they did not like limiting it to a week.

Also, the fact that I don't see—the member from Ottawa South talked about no repercussions by the employer on the employee, and that is a good thing. But I can safely say to him that certainly you'll need a large enforcement group to keep that, because sometimes an employer may decide that he's making the decision—not the government—about his employment and his company, and no one's going to tell him what he can do with his employees. You may run into some of that, so I hope you're going to have a lot of inspectors to back that up, because you're going to be a busy guy.

As far as compensation for pay, they're letting people take time off to take care of their loved one, but they are losing their income. I say to them, if I had been drafting the bill—why wouldn't they have had flexible work hours? If the company worked days and afternoons, and your parent or loved one needed you during the day, and maybe a sister could do it after work because she's on straight days, why couldn't you work straight afternoons—or nights, or weekends? Then you don't lose any money, and you've still got the time to take care of your loved one. I didn't see any of that in this bill, and that's huge. That certainly wouldn't hurt the employer, wouldn't hurt the employee and certainly would help the family. Why didn't they think about that? They didn't.

I think you're going to have some real problems enforcing, keeping the companies in line, so—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you.

You have two minutes to respond, the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It has been a fun hour and a bit, with members on all sides of this House. It has been a good debate. I'd like to thank my honourable colleague from Durham, of course, who shared time with me; the member from London-Fanshawe; the member from Ottawa South, who I ran into last night, and he alluded to that in his remarks—we ran into each other at the grocery store, where he met my daughter and my wife; the member from Nipissing; and also the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek.

Speaker, again, we're going to be supporting Bill 21. We did work to raise some concerns that we had with the original bill—I think it was Bill 30—that was introduced in the last session.

I can say that I have a good working relationship with the government's Minister of Labour. Obviously, we disagree on many things when it comes to the labour file, but we have a good relationship. I've sat down with his staff and he, himself, on another matter.

Listen, we are going to support this bill.

Bill 21, the Employment Standards Amendment Act, proposes several amendments to the current Employment Standards Act to correlate with some similar changes that the federal government has made to the Canada Labour Code.

I think this bill is important because we all know families faced with loved ones who are going through some health challenges. That's why I think, at the end of the day, we can come together as legislators and pass this bill.

In closing, I would urge the government to consider moving forward on the issues that are really important to the people of Ontario: creating winning conditions for the economy and getting the books balanced in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I want to preface my remarks with one indication that Bill 21 is something that our party, the NDP, is in a position to support. There are a number of areas that we were able to improve, and I want to highlight those areas. There are also some further considerations that I want members of this House to look at and think about, moving forward.

One of the first things I want to begin speaking about is that the amendments show how well this House can function when we have a common goal and we commit to working together to achieve that goal.

There are three key areas that were amended. I think they were great amendments—they speak to the members' vision—to look at addressing this issue and addressing the fact that there were certain weaknesses in the bill as it existed.

One of those key issues that was brought up was the fact that when people are ill, it's not always the case that you need a block of time off. The reality is that if someone's ill, sometimes you need a more flexible type of leave. For example, if there's an appointment every Tuesday when someone's ill, you don't need to be with them every day of the week, but you certainly need to be

with that person on a Tuesday to make sure they go into their appointment, they're taken care of for that day and brought home. So you need Tuesdays off, but you don't need three weeks at a time, you don't need two weeks at a time, you don't need one week at a time. You need every Tuesday off.

1720

To allow that flexibility shows a sensitivity to the realities that people face. The reality is that, based on an individual's need, there should be caregiver leave that addresses that directly. So I think the amendment that was put forward both by the NDP and the PCs to address this flexibility was a great way of addressing this reality, a great way of addressing the fact that people sometimes need more flexibility with their time off.

The other amendment that was brought forward, and I think speaks to an understanding and an appreciation of the different circumstances that people in different parts of the province face, concerns the reality that people who live in more remote communities, communities outside of the GTA or outside of areas that have a greater density of medical professionals or physicians—that in those communities, requiring the employee to have a note signed by a physician is sometimes not feasible. The reality is, many people don't have access to a physician, they don't have access to a family doctor, and to make it that, to obtain caregiver leave, there has to be authorization by a physician would preclude a great number of people.

Perhaps my colleague from Timiskaming-Cochrane can speak about the fact that there are still many people in his community who don't have access to a family doctor, and there are other communities I know in the north that have a paucity of family physicians. Those residents will still have circumstances—and we hope that this never happens to anyone, but the reality is, it may happen that they need to take some time off to take care of a loved one, a family member, but they don't have access to a physician. So the amendment that was put forward was that a registered nurse or a psychologist could authorize the caregiver leave.

Now, that was a solid move. It was an appropriate amendment, and it addressed the realities of those living in remote communities. So I want to applaud the efforts of the opposition parties, both the NDP and PCs, for taking the initiative to put forward these amendments. I know they were resisted by the Liberals, but these were important amendments that definitely protected residents in rural communities. It recognized the obstacles and the barriers they face and it facilitated a manner by which they could still employ this caregiver leave, given their sometimes restricted access to medical health care professionals.

The final amendment, which did get all-party support—and it was a good amendment—was that the bill initially addressed serious medical conditions, which of course goes without saying. We need to ensure that people can take time off to care for their family members or loved ones when there's a serious medical condition. But there's also chronic illnesses that have a devastating

impact on families, that have a devastating impact on the lives of individuals, and we need to make sure we have a caregiver leave that addresses those circumstances as well, where people who are diagnosed with and are suffering from chronic illnesses can also receive the support and care from their loved ones, from their family members. That was an amendment that was put forward by all parties.

The additional component was also episodic issues, such as dementia or epilepsy. There are also times when the seriousness of the illness is not a long-term seriousness; it's a specific moment in time. It's a diagnosis which is limited in its impact in terms of time but quite serious in its impact in terms of the impact on that individual's life, such as dementia or epilepsy. They might be episodic; they might be resolved. There might be psychiatric issues that can address it. But that was a great amendment as well to address that issue.

Building on one of the comments raised by my colleague the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek was the issue that, if this bill goes forward—and we all hope that it will gain support and will be passed. As I said, the NDP certainly supports it, and I've understood, from hearing everyone, that all parties seem to support the bill.

The problem is moving forward. If we give this caregiver leave as a right to the employee and to individuals—they have this ability to access it; there's this right; there's this law enacted—a law is only as powerful as the enforcement of that law. For example, you're given this right. An employee can go ahead and take time off, much-needed time off. They can take the time off and care for their loved one or their family member.

Now, if you have that right but there's no enforcement on the other side—so I take action and I say I want to engage this right, and I want to take some time off. But if my employer doesn't follow through on the law—my employer says, "You know what? There may be a law out there but no one's going to enforce it anyway, so I'm going to fire you. If you take your time off, I'm going to fire you. You're not going to have a job to come back to." What recourse does that individual have? If you've given someone a right but you don't make sure that that right is enforced, then the right is quite meaningless.

The reason why I bring this up is that we have to have a serious conversation about the enforcement that the Ministry of Labour often lacks, the enforcement that the Ministry of Labour is often not able to do. If we're giving a right to the citizens of Ontario, to the residents of Ontario, we have to make sure that they have a sense of security that this law will be enforced, that there will be enforcement that will protect their rights.

There are many protections under the Employment Standards Act, but there are also many infringements of those rights. There are many infringements on the labour conditions that people are entitled to, on the rights they're entitled to, and there's absolutely no recourse. There's no remedy. There is no enforcement.

So I ask the government now, in my time given to debate this bill, that you look seriously at this issue of

enforcement. And as seriously as you're taking this issue of providing caregiver leave, you also, on the other hand, have to make sure that there is enforcement in place.

Speaking about the Employment Standards Act in general, there is a vast number of issues. There are numerous issues that people face when it comes to employment rights, and there are a number of times when their rights are violated. Broadly speaking, beyond just this caregiver leave, we need to make sure people are protected in their workplaces.

An issue that has come up in my riding, and I know it's an issue that has come up across Ontario, is that one of the worst sources of violations of people's rights, when it comes to employment, is temporary job agencies. They're also known as temporary help agencies or temporary work agencies.

People working at these agencies are employed in a temporary fashion; they don't have a permanent position. When you're temporarily employed, literally your employment is precarious, because by the nature of it, you don't know if you're going to have your job tomorrow or the next week or the next month.

Your position in that employment is also precarious in the sense that being afraid to lose your job means that you're also afraid to raise concerns or raise issues. People who are working in precarious employment, in unsure employment—in employment that's not permanent, that's not something they could have any sense of job security in—those individuals are often treated the worst in jobs. Their conditions are some of the most abhorrent.

One of the issues that comes up is that people who are working through a temporary job agency don't know if they're entitled to take a break. They're not sure if they are entitled to the same pay. They're not sure if they're entitled to vacation or other sorts of pay. If we're not protecting those folks, we are doing a great disservice to our residents, to the citizens of this province. In fact, recent reports indicated that 50% of Ontarians—50%; half of our population—work in some form of precarious employment.

Precarious employment is a real issue, and it comes back to this issue of enforcement. We're giving people rights, like the Employment Standards Act, like this caregiver act. If we're giving rights to people in Ontario and we're not protecting them—we're not enforcing these rights—the rights are meaningless.

Again, I ask the government to take some action on temporary help agencies and temporary employment agencies. People working in those agencies have told me about some horrible conditions.

One of the issues, again, as I have indicated, is that if you're a temporary worker at that particular place of employment, you're often told to do some of the most difficult work. You're not being paid as well—because the agency takes sometimes as much as half of your pay—you're being told to do some of the most difficult work, and then, when it comes to the conditions of employment, these temporary workers don't often get the breaks they deserve. They're not sure if they have the right to refuse work if it's unsafe, and because they're so

uncertain about their future, they are not willing to raise any concerns. They're nervous and they're afraid, frankly, to complain or to even register any complaints. So that's an issue that I ask this government to take some steps on.

1730

In 2009, there were some amendments made that increased the protection, but those amendments created a great deal of loopholes. The loopholes that exist basically create a circumstance where the protections aren't being offered to these temporary workers. If we have 50% of our population working in some form of precarious employment and they're not being protected, we need to do something, seriously, about this. This is a growing concern, this is a serious concern and it's something that's quite troubling.

The other issue with temporary employment circumstances which calls for—

Ms. Soo Wong: Madam Speaker, point of order. I believe the bill we're debating is Bill 21. I'm just hearing in the last two minutes that the member opposite is talking about temporary agencies. I just wanted some clarification: Are we talking about debating third reading on Bill 21 or are we talking about temporary agencies?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I've listened carefully, and I would ask the member to continue but to be mindful of the rules.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I thank you, Madam Speaker, for paying attention. The reason why I was drawing the analogy is that this law that we're enacting now, this bill, this future law and future legislation, doesn't have enforcement. Without enforcement, the law is meaningless. There are similar laws that have been enacted that have sought to protect employees.

The Employment Standards Acts is one example. Without the necessary enforcement of that act, we can't protect employees. If we can't protect them in terms of their rights, then how can we protect them in terms of allowing them to have caregiver leave? The connections are very strong, and that's why it's important to address them.

Another area that was addressed in terms of this caregiver leave—and it's something that other members have addressed and brought up as well, and I think it's an important area that we need to focus some time on—is that if people are going to take some time off work, the financial reality in the province, and particularly in households, is that people are struggling to make ends meet. Life has become very unaffordable. It's very difficult to make your payments. It's very difficult, basically, to pay the bills.

In those circumstances, we expect—and I think it's a great idea that people should be able to take time off work so that they can care for their loved ones, but if they're taking that time off without any sort of income, it becomes very difficult. It's one of those examples that draw my attention to the idea that all too often in this House we look at things in a very myopic way. We look at things with a very narrow sort of vision. We're only thinking about the fact that we need to give an employee

the right to take some time off work so they can care for their loved ones, but there's actually a bigger connection here.

Caring for someone who is ill—if a loved one or a family member is doing that—actually takes some of the burden off the health care system. You get someone who can provide care, someone who knows the individual quite well, someone who has that vested interest, that love and affection, and that can provide a great source of healing.

If, instead of thinking of it as a cost to society, we look at it as an investment, people caring for their loved ones can actually provide a better, healthier society. There are other jurisdictions where, instead of just having a caregiver leave, people are actually able to be employed through the state to provide care for their loved ones. It's a system that's actually developed, and it's working in Scandinavian countries.

I had the opportunity to visit Sweden, and in Stockholm I met some folks who were providing care for their family members. One individual was actually—we met and we were out at a local restaurant. He told me that in his current position he was working and studying at the university for his master's, but at the same time he was caring for his sister's child, his niece. What he was doing was providing care for his niece. He was the primary caregiver while his sister was working, and he was being paid a very livable wage for doing that service. It's a way of providing care, but it's also a delivery mechanism that didn't require that child to be in a long-term-care facility, didn't require that child to be at a hospital, and still allowed the mother to work, continue to be employed and continue to contribute to society.

So when we look at these problems that we're faced with, if we look at them as broader than just this narrow vision—"Okay, this is just an issue about employment law"—and look at it beyond that and say, "Listen, the way we take care of our employees and the way our employees can take care of their loved ones are connected to a health care delivery model," it's connected to the overall health of our society. These connections can work synergistically to create solutions that are not just looking at things in a subdivided, limited scope. We can broaden our vision and create a healthier society with broader solutions.

I just want to close with this final submission to you all. In this light of looking at things with a broader vision, the broader issue here is that we need to look at better ways of delivering care for folks, if loved ones can be one way and family members can be one way to provide assistance and care for people.

We also need to look at one of the underlying issues here. The three areas where this bill seeks to provide protection are unpaid family-related leave for, obviously, a seriously or chronically ill family member, a seriously ill or dying child, and parents of children who are murdered or have gone missing. When it comes to seriously or chronically ill family members, or seriously ill children, it's really a question of our health and what we can do to prevent the circumstance in the first place.

Obviously, there are going to be medical emergencies and accidents where things can happen beyond our expectation and beyond our prevention. But for chronic illnesses and for serious illnesses, if we take one step back and look at how we can prevent this from happening in the first place—it's important that we allow this caregiver leave, and I certainly support that—the bigger question is, what can we do as a society to prevent those serious illnesses in the first place? What can we do as a society to prevent those chronic illnesses in the first place?

One of the most important things we can do is make the healthy choice the easier choice. What we can do is increase health promotion. We can work towards preventing some of these serious illnesses from happening in the first place.

Diabetes is one of the most serious illnesses and of the most growing in terms of rate of diagnosis. That is one of the most preventable illnesses that we have in the myriad of illnesses and diseases that are out there. If we could only commit more to investing in solutions—which would be prevention, health promotion, encouraging healthy nutrition, encouraging exercise, making exercise easier and more accessible, making it more affordable and having more options for exercise—we could prevent the illnesses in the first place so that maybe families wouldn't need to take time off to take care of them.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise in support of Bill 21, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000. I'm pleased to support the bill, and not just because it's a government bill. The bill is about compassion, to support families across Ontario, to assure every family member who is currently looking after a loved one who is critically ill that their job is being protected. At the end of the day, nothing really matters if our family is not safe and is not looked after.

The other piece of the legislation that my colleague from Bramalea-Gore-Malton is talking about is preventing chronic disease. Our government has taken proactive provisions when it comes to the respiratory health of Ontarians by removing dirty coal in our communities—it's the right thing to do—addressing childhood obesity and dealing with the whole issue of diabetic health.

I hear exactly what the member opposite is talking about, but this particular bill is about protecting families, so that the loved ones looking after the sick, especially those with critically ill children or when a child has been murdered or disappeared, can have a time of leave and their jobs are secure.

1740

We also know the bill has been supported by different groups or agencies across Ontario, from the Parkinson Society to the Canadian Cancer Society; one of the largest nursing agencies, Saint Elizabeth; and the Ontario Home Care Association. I know the bill has been reviewed through the committee and it's time for us to have this last debate for third reading. Hopefully, the bill

will be passed before we rise for the holiday break. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Ms. Laurie Scott: It's a pleasure to be in the chamber this afternoon discussing Bill 21, the Employment Standards Amendment Act (Leaves to Help Families).

Interjection.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm surrounded by obviously encouraging caucus members here. The member from Nipissing here and his Fedeli finance have been talked about today also. Of course, the whip has come in from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke to make sure that we're all in order here and that we're speaking to the bill, for which I had a chance to sit in committee and listen to the deputations as well as to do some clause-by-clause amendments.

It was mostly associations, certainly, that came in—I know cancer care came in—and we heard them. Amendments were brought forward. I think that the biggest change that was consistent throughout the deputations that came to committee was the fact of not having to take all the days in a row. I think that that came out loud and clear. The member from Durham spoke earlier today that there are a lot of good employers in the province of Ontario. We actually hope there are more good employers, if we can create some more jobs and get businesses started up again in the province. They are very flexible usually with family members in taking time off to care for loved ones. This is what we're speaking about here today.

But we have to ensure sometimes that the standards amendment act, which is mirroring somewhat the federal legislation, can be applied in a fair way. So when family members need half a day or just a day—that's why we like to have the flexibility in for those family members, as we, I'm sure, all have been involved at one point or another—remarks have certainly been made that there is no money. This is just to save the job. There is no money that goes with this bill. So in a way it's a bit of a shell but we certainly made some amendments and look forward to the final debate on the bill. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to congratulate the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton on his really visionary approach to this topic. I know that the specific legislation he was speaking to was Bill 21 but he used the opportunity to talk in a much broader way about issues of prevention and ensuring that we have a system that enables all of us to maintain our health into the future.

I really liked his focus on a social-determinants-of-health model. We know from that research that the best way to maintain the health of a population is to create jobs. A job is the number one indicator of good health. We also know that affordable housing is necessary to maintain population health—access to recreational activities and other kinds of opportunities for social inclusion.

The member from Scarborough-Agincourt, when she referred to the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton's

comments, really talked more about a disease model of health, and we really need to look much broader than that.

I also wanted to comment briefly on his comments about shifting the resources to enabling caregivers to provide care for their ill loved ones and the financial savings to the state that are achieved. I think we have to be aware of the psychological, physical and emotional impacts on caregivers as caregivers start to pick up more and more of the responsibility to provide care to their loved ones.

I think we can have a system that will ensure that there is quality care and also that all of our citizens are well cared for by their loved ones and health care professionals.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you very much.

The member for York South–Weston.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I'm pleased to add my voice to this bill, Bill 21. I had the privilege to carry it—follow it—through the House in its first incarnation, when it was Bill 30, and it was introduced back in December 2011.

It has been reintroduced. It has gone through a lot of debate. It has gone to committee. It is now back for third reading, and we're hoping that this time we will see it passed with the support of all parties, as we have until now.

What I wanted to mention is that this bill, as you all know, bridges a gap that is existing between family medical leave and this one, which would be the family caregiver leave, to provide a leave that would apply in cases of serious illnesses or injury, even where there is no imminent risk of death.

The one with the imminent risk of death is paid; there is a corresponding income to that. For this one, yes, there isn't, but I think it addresses the need that many newcomers, mainly immigrant families, have. Sometimes they can have a loved one who is sick overseas, in a different country. They need to go; they would go anyways. But with this bill, they would not lose their job, and I think that for those people, it would really be important.

I remember, before my dad passed away in 1994, I had to go overseas a number of times, and something like this would have really helped.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The time has expired for questions and comments. We'll go back to the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I appreciate all the comments. I appreciate the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, who brought up the good amendments that were brought forward. I think it's a testament not only to the members in this House but also the associations that came forward and raised those issues.

I want to thank the member from Scarborough–Agincourt for adding her voice to the issue and stressing the fact that we need to pass this bill.

However, I agree strongly with the member from London West, who raised the key distinction that the member from Scarborough–Agincourt's comments were around the disease model, and what I was trying to do

was address the fact that we need to look towards a prevention model, and that the caregiver leave, in a myopic, narrow viewpoint, addresses that issue, but it doesn't go beyond that and look at other solutions in a broader scope of how we can transform our health care system and transform our society. I really appreciate the fact that the member from London West spoke on those issues.

I think we really need to look at, one, that the caregiver—he or she takes on a lot of burden. The caregiver will often put themselves in some financial risk, but also, the mental and physical strain of having to care for someone else could create some other problems as well.

In terms of allowing and providing for an exemption, we also need to provide for a support system so that caregivers are not only exempted and allowed to take that time off so they don't lose their job, but that we also protect and support them so that they can still maintain their own health and they can contribute to society, instead of also falling ill.

I appreciate the member from York South–Weston talking about the gap that existed, and this bill certainly closes the gap and allows for those who are ill but not imminently—they're not going to die within a certain period of time but are still seriously ill. It allows them to have the protection they deserve.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's a privilege to rise today and to speak to Bill 21, the Employment Standards Amendment Act, also known as Leaves to Help Families Act.

I was pleased to speak to this bill at second reading, way back in March, and I'm glad to see that it has changed for the better since I debated it.

At the heart of this bill is a desire to allow Ontario's caregivers to focus on what matters most—the health and well-being of their loved ones—without having to fear about losing their job.

1750

Every member of this Legislature has, at one point or another, seen the tremendous impact that a sudden illness or injury to a family member can have. Several members of this Legislature have actually given personal testimonies, personal examples, of times when they were required to provide care to family members who suffered from an injury or even an illness.

One can only imagine the strain that the disappearance or death of a child would have on a family. Surely work is the farthest thing from their mind—my mind, anyone's mind—in a situation such as that.

In the many months that this bill has been debated, I've heard stories from constituents who have faced challenges while trying to provide care for their family members. One constituent's father suffered a heart issue last summer and has been in intensive care for several months now. Eventually, the problem escalated, and he required a heart transplant. When he went through the surgery in London, his daughter was working part-time in Windsor at a fast-food chain. She made the choice to be

there for her family, and, as a result, her employer stopped putting her on the schedule.

She was punished for being there for her family as her father fought a life-threatening battle. Clearly, her employer needs some training in compassionate leave for staff faced with the need to care for the health and well-being of loved ones.

Looking specifically at this legislation, this bill would create three new job-protected leaves. The first one: a family caregiver leave, which provides up to eight weeks of unpaid leave for employees to provide care to a family member that a qualified health professional has deemed to have a serious medical condition. Then, the critically ill child care leave states an employee is entitled up to 37 weeks of leave under this section to provide care or support to a critically ill child of the employee. Finally, the crime-related child death and disappearance leave offers up to 52 weeks of unpaid leave for parents of a missing child and up to 104 weeks of unpaid leave for parents of a child who has died as a result of a crime.

Many Ontarians enjoy a positive relationship with their employers who understand the importance of family. Many employers are willing to give their employees time off to deal with family health emergencies.

Each member of this Legislature is an employer, in a way, as we all have staff. I'm sure that if any of our staff were to encounter a family emergency and needed to take a few days to provide care for a loved one, we would work something out. However, this legislation is sorely needed for those who are currently unable to take a few days or weeks off to care for a family member or loved one.

In my time as MPP for Chatham-Kent-Essex, I have had the opportunity to meet with local CCAC officials and front-line staff to just see how they serve the needs of residents. I've also heard from constituents who have had to fight to get assistance for their loved ones.

In committee, the Ontario Home Care Association stated that "the publicly funded home care system looks after 600,000 people a year, and that number is growing." Their CEO, Sue VanderBent, went on to say that family members "provide the majority of care."

While our front-line local CCAC workers provide compassionate care for residents, nothing can replace the loving care provided by a family member. Our health care system must work hand in hand with family caregivers to ensure patients receive the best possible health care.

When the health and safety of a loved one are in jeopardy and they require care, nothing else matters. You drop everything. You do whatever you can do to help out. But, for many Ontarians, dropping everything and taking a leave is simply not an option. This bill helps families who may be on the verge of crisis by taking a large stressor out of the equation: the fear of having to choose between your loved ones and your livelihood. That's a choice no one should ever have to be faced with, that no one should ever have to make. With Bill 21, if passed, never again will anyone be forced to make that decision.

This bill promotes a collaborative effort of caregiving. By allowing employees to take a leave to provide necessary care for a family member experiencing health issues, we simultaneously protect families and save precious health care resources. We all know how overburdened our health care system is. If basic care can in fact be provided by a family member, we should do all we can to ensure that they are able to provide that care without fear of losing their job.

As I previously mentioned, I had spoken to this bill at second reading, back in the spring, and I had a number of concerns that I had hoped would have been addressed in committee. Speaker, many of those concerns that were raised in this House centred on the lack of flexibility in the bill.

One concern I had with the previous version of Bill 21 was that it only allowed a doctor to sign off on the leave. The member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington voiced some of the concerns of our party regarding this bill in committee. Sadly, many Ontarians do not have a family doctor. In rural or remote portions of this province, many residents only have access to a registered nurse on a day-to-day basis. Constituents back in my riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex certainly understand this reality.

This year, I was fortunate enough to do some job shadowing at the Leamington District Memorial Hospital, as well as the Chatham-Kent Health Alliance. While I was there, I was able to see first-hand the kind of quality and care that the doctors, triage nurses, volunteers and gerontology emergencies management nurses provide. I was also able to see them struggle to keep up.

In Chatham-Kent, there's a massive doctor shortage that the municipality is actually working very hard to overcome. I've been told that Essex county alone is in need of over 100 doctors—and Leamington is part of that Essex county, but part of my riding.

So, on behalf of my constituents, thank you for amending this bill to make it easier for them to benefit from these new leaves. By allowing doctors, registered nurses and psychologists to sign off that a patient requires family care, we offer these benefits to many, many more Ontarians.

Another concern that was voiced about Bill 21 was that it didn't offer enough flexibility in terms of the amount of time that an employee must take off to provide care. Originally, the bill provided blocks of weeks for an employee to provide care. However, for many caregivers in this province, a week may be much longer than they actually require. Oftentimes, a caregiver only needs to take a day or two or an afternoon off to provide care for their family member. Perhaps a caregiver in Blenheim simply needs to drive their mother to the hospital in Chatham or stop by to do some household chores that the patient is unable to complete on their own. In these cases, a week's leave would be unnecessary. It would be much more convenient for these individuals to take a day off every now and then and provide care as needed, instead of having to take a whole week off work.

Additionally, many Ontarians simply cannot afford to take off an entire unpaid week of work. I hear from constituents every week who are having a tough time keeping up with their bills. Unfortunately, their bills are about to get even higher, as just recently the Liberals confessed, with the release of their long-term energy plan of 2013. This is not to be mistaken with their long-term energy plan released a couple of years ago. Yesterday, Ontarians learned their energy bills can barely keep up with—and they'll be increasing.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to Standing Order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

PROPERTY TAXATION

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Leeds–Grenville has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Minister of Finance.

The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

1800

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to provide further detail on how MPAC is stifling local food production in my riding of Leeds–Grenville.

Whether it's soaring hydro rates, endless red tape, outdated labour laws or, in the case we're debating today, MPAC assessments, business owners feel like they've fallen behind before they even get started. The government just can't grasp the fact that when it's more costly to do business in Ontario, jobs disappear.

And it's not only jobs that they are driving away. I'm just as concerned that they're killing the entrepreneurial spirit we must encourage if we're ever going to get Ontario turned around.

In the part of Ontario that I represent, many of the entrepreneurs we're relying on to boost our rural economy are found on farms. In my question to the Minister of Finance, I mentioned two examples of local entrepreneurs: Nigel Smith and the McGurrins.

I want to concentrate my remarks tonight on Nigel, because unlike Terry and David McGurrin's pancake house at Edgewood Farms, MPAC hasn't shut him down yet.

Nigel is quickly gaining a reputation for the fantastic artisan cheese he makes at Bushgarden Farmstead Cheese, located in Rideau Lakes township. I've had the pleasure of sampling what he's making, and I have to tell you, Speaker, it's fantastic. His cheese is exactly the kind of value-added processing we have to encourage if we're truly serious about promoting local food in Ontario.

Despite the great quality and growing market, it was an incredible struggle for Nigel to start making his cheese

just over a year ago. He battled the government's red tape for three and a half years before he had the necessary improvements. You have to admire his determination. I know his dad, Bob, said it was a real kick to Nigel, the day the MPAC taxmen walked up the laneway.

After heading back to the comfort of their office, those MPAC inspectors slapped an industrial classification on the small building where milk is pumped. Let me set the scene: This building is not quite 1,000 square feet, so it comprises about 0.013% of Nigel's 160-acre farm. But changing the classification of that tiny building from farm to industrial had a huge impact on the property, and Nigel was faced with a hit of an additional \$1,200—all this because the MPAC assessors don't know the difference between artisanal and industrial.

That was exactly my point that I made to the minister last Thursday: "Industrial" is the exact opposite of what happens on that farm, and I wish someone would just sit down and explain that to MPAC.

Many of us had the opportunity last week to go to the Ontario Federation of Agriculture banquet. I sat with representatives of Leeds–Grenville, and we picked up the discussion about MPAC's value-added assessment nonsense that we started in my constituency office two weeks ago.

Now, I know the government has heard OFA's position, but I think it's very important for those listening today to have me read it on the record.

OFA says, "Ontario must retain and build food processing capacity to have a successful agriculture industry. However, the current property tax classifications penalize farmers for adding value to their farm products."

That, Speaker, is really the bottom line. The government can't talk out of both sides of their mouth. When a farm decides to add value and get that local food producing and helping the local economy, the government can't then treat them like a cash cow by sending in the MPAC taxmen. Put another way, local food can't be the golden egg of the rural economy when Premier Wynne and her finance minister let MPAC kill the goose that laid it.

I'm going to quote something else in the very limited time that I have. It's from the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario's commentary. Their quote: "Recently, the CFFO has become very concerned about incidents of increased taxation levels on buildings used for on-farm value-added cycle. Farmers find themselves in the midst of a counterproductive cycle."

"On the one hand, government agencies encourage farmers to add value to their product. At the same time, other government agencies, notably the Ontario Ministry of Finance, marginalize the financial benefits of value-adding by adjusting taxation levels on buildings used for that purpose."

"This is obviously not a sustainable situation."

It sounds a lot like the question I asked the finance minister last Thursday. So I hope the parliamentary assistant, the member for Vaughan, isn't going to stand up and pay lip service to this issue, because it's a huge issue in the rural economy. I want him to stand up and

assure people like Nigel Smith and Dave and Terry McGurrin and other on-farm entrepreneurs like them, whether it be in Leeds–Grenville or across Ontario, that MPAC has new marching orders. They’ve already shut down the pancake house after a dozen years. I don’t want Nigel Smith’s farm to be the next casualty of MPAC.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The parliamentary assistant has up to five minutes.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I’m pleased to have the opportunity to stand in my place and to further respond to the question posed by the member from Leeds–Grenville last week to the Minister of Finance. As you know, Madam Speaker, our government is committed to supporting small businesses, to help them grow and to create jobs. That is why, among other things, we have put in place a competitive tax system for business and cut the marginal effective tax rate, a key determinant of business investment, in half.

To help agri-food producers in the province, this government introduced the Local Food Act, 2013, which promotes the good things that are grown, harvested and processed in Ontario. The new legislation is part of a strategy to build Ontario’s economy by making more local food available in markets, schools, cafeterias, grocery stores and restaurants. This will create jobs and expand the province’s crucial agri-food sector.

Building a stronger agri-food industry is part of our government’s economic plan to support a dynamic and innovative business climate, invest in people and invest in modern infrastructure. Speaker, as we all know and we all agree, good things definitely grow here in Ontario.

But that’s not all that we’ve done to support businesses in this province. Since 2007, the Ontario government has cut high business education tax rates, resulting in savings of over \$200 million per year to businesses. This has maximized the economic benefits of the initiative in terms of addressing tax inequities and distortions and levelling the playing field for businesses facing decisions about where to build new manufacturing facilities or other business complexes.

Of course, Madam Speaker, this government has introduced Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act, just this past season. This bill, provided it passes, will help 60,000 small businesses, charities and not-for-profits grow and save more money by cutting payroll taxes effective January 1. Almost 90% of private sector employers would be exempt from paying the employer health tax. This would save them up to \$975 annually. More than 12,000 employers would no longer pay the tax bill.

I am happy to speak about the fairness of property tax classifications, Madam Speaker. A key principle of the property tax system is ensuring consistency so that similar properties are taxed in a similar manner, regardless of where they’re located. So, for all farm-related activities, we apply the following property tax classifications with a view to providing consistent treatment to activities located on or off farms. The portion of a property used for primary agriculture, such as growing

crops or raising livestock, is included in the farm property class. The portion of a property used for selling farm produce, such as a store or restaurant, is included in the commercial property class. The portion of a property used for processing or manufacturing—for example, making wine—is included in the industrial property class.

In response to requests from the agricultural sector and from municipalities, our government has taken action to bring consistent and equitable property tax treatment to a number of agricultural activities since 2003, including farm bunkhouses, sour cherry processors, maple syrup producers and equestrian farms. We continue to enjoy a productive dialogue on farm property assessment issues, Madam Speaker, through a multi-party working group that includes representatives from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, from municipalities, from the Municipal Property Assessment Corp. and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food.

Where there is ambiguity or lack of clarity or inconsistency in the property class definitions, we will continue to address individual issues as they may arise, which brings me around to the Special Purpose Business Property Assessment Review. As many in this House will know, in the 2013 Ontario budget, the provincial government announced that we would be conducting a review to identify opportunities to further strengthen property assessment processes and the property tax system in Ontario. Speaker, I am proud to say that, on behalf of the Minister of Finance, as his parliamentary assistant, I am leading this particular review and have been working very closely with a number of important stakeholders and partners across the province across a wide variety of special-purpose business properties, including farms, to try and strengthen Ontario’s property assessment system. So the House knows and so the member from Leeds–Grenville knows as well, we intend, and in fact can confirm, that the final report back to the minister will be released before the end of 2013.

Just so we’re clear, this review is focused on areas where municipalities and taxpayer representatives expressed an interest in working with the province, including clarifying and refining assessment methodologies applied to special-purpose business properties such as mills, landfills and billboards. It also includes looking at the assessment, specifically, of farm properties, reviewing the timelines for assessment appeal processes and considering other opportunities to strengthen MPAC.

I look forward to delivering this report shortly, just as I look forward to working with this government and this Legislature to implement our three-part plan to grow Ontario’s economy and create jobs by investing in people, building modern infrastructure and supporting a dynamic business climate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1111.

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McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
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Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
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Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 40th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 4 December 2013

Mercredi 4 décembre 2013



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 4 December 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 4 décembre 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WASTE REDUCTION ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA RÉDUCTION DES DÉCHETS

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 26, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 91, An Act to establish a new regime for the reduction, reuse and recycling of waste and to repeal the Waste Diversion Act, 2002 / Projet de loi 91, Loi créant un nouveau cadre pour la réduction, la réutilisation et le recyclage des déchets et abrogeant la Loi de 2002 sur le réacheminement des déchets.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm very pleased to join the debate this morning on Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act or Waste Diversion Act, whatever they want to call it. I think the diversion act would certainly be appropriate, because it's an attempt by the government to divert attention from their sorry record when it comes to waste diversion over the past 10 years.

I recall, when I was first elected here in 2003, then-Environment Minister Leona Dombrowsky—now Justice of the Peace Leona Dombrowsky, appointed by Dalton McGuinty—made a promise to the people of Ontario that the McGuinty government would have a waste diversion rate of 60% within five years. Well, the waste diversion rate is well under 30% today. Promise made; promise broken. But we've heard that before. That's a pretty ongoing, repeated refrain across the province of Ontario when it comes to the Liberal government: Promise made; promise broken. What they want to do is they want to divert attention away from their sorry record by bringing in this Waste Diversion Act.

You know what? When you have an act like this, one of the key components is to remove the cost from municipalities and producers; there was a shared cost in the past, and now it's going to put the cost 100% onto the producers. On the surface, that would sound like a popular thing to do. Of course it's popular, because if you say to somebody, "Well, it used to cost you money; now

somebody else is going to pay for it," the average person, if they don't really do a whole lot of thinking about it, is going to say, "Hey, that's a good idea. I like the fact that somebody else is going to pay for it." Then, when they tell you that it's going to include all these big businesses: "Oh, that's really good. Really good. Let's make those big businesses pay."

Unfortunately, the world doesn't work quite that simply. You see, those big businesses didn't get to be the cornerstones of our economy by making dumb decisions; they got there by being efficient, effective, providing the products that consumers use and demand, but also operating at a profit, because if you can't operate at a profit, you won't operate at all; you'll be out of business. This is what the government wants: to somehow pretend this is going to cost you nothing.

Business has a choice. If they get hit with—and this is a half-a-billion-dollar per year bill to business. This is a half-a-billion-dollar bill to some of the strongest, most dependable job creators in Ontario—a half-a-billion-dollar a year bill. What happens when you're in business and you get hit with this kind of expense without any real consultation with the business? Listen, the Liberals talked to a few of their friends. They said, "Would you like this?" You know, the ones they like to pander to for votes—the Environmental Defence people and all of those. "Hey, do you like this one?" "Yeah, we like that one." "Well, we're going to do it, because we want to keep your support. We want to keep the money rolling in" from those fancy, slick, very wealthy organizations that support you, "and we want to keep your support at the polls, because we want to keep fooling the people and winning elections"—on shell games and smoke and mirrors.

So businesses now have a choice. They're going to have a choice. They're going to be able to make the choice to absorb this half-a-billion-dollar cost, and perhaps lose thousands—they would have to fire thousands of people across the province of Ontario to be able to cut their expenditures—or they're going to do what they've always done, and that is just pass the cost on to the consumer. So the consumer is going to pay.

Do you know what they've done here? They had such a mess—I see the former environment minister, now the Attorney General, and I wish him the very best as he prepares to retire from this august chamber; I know he's not seeking re-election in the next election. I must say I have enjoyed my 10-plus years with him here in this House. He's a gentleman and I will miss him. But I do remember when he brought out this crazy eco tax thing. I

tell you, that lasted about as long as one of those commercials on television: 30 seconds and the people said “Nyet, nyet, nyet.” That was the end of that stuff. He was shell-shocked; he was punch-drunk, running around here. He didn’t know what to do, he got such a backlash. What did they do? They just shuffled that under the carpet and buried it.

So now they want to bring out this gigantic new bureaucracy, and we’re going to have—first of all, all of the old stuff stays. All of the old organizations stay, and they have this gigantic new bureaucracy. We’re going to have a waste czar.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakubski: You know what? I’m hearing echoes and rumblings. Do I hear the name Chris Mazza? Forget about messing up the ER in Thunder Bay; Liberals will have a job for Chris Mazza. They’re probably going to make him the waste czar. Or maybe they’re going to bring somebody from eHealth or wherever; maybe Pat Dillon will pick a name or something. But rest assured, ladies and gentlemen across Ontario: This will be not a diversion; a disaster. It is doomed to fail, because the industry does not support it.

Now, why would you not have sat down—we need to sit down with the industry and establish real, enforceable targets. Industrial waste diversion has gone down from 19% to 12% since this government took office. What does that tell you? The people steering the ship are doing a bad job. They’re not working with industry. They haven’t sat down with them and said, “Look, waste diversion is important; our environment is important.”

I want to take my hat off to our critic for the environment, Michael Harris, who has done a fantastic job as environment critic. He sees the big picture. He sees the truth. He doesn’t jump on populist bull and try to jump on the votes of today; he actually is thinking long-term about what matters to the people of Ontario.

0910

I also want to congratulate Michael and Sarah and their son Murphy on a new arrival on Monday night: Lincoln Lloyd Harris. God bless them. It’s fantastic to hear. That’s all wonderful news, and I’m looking forward to seeing Lincoln here someday.

Now, Michael has got it right: Let’s sit down with these people in industry and say, “This is the way it’s going to be, folks, but you’ve got to be part of it.” You guys are saying, “You’re going to pay for it, but you have no involvement. You’re just going to pay the bill. We’re going to run the show and we’re going to hit you with a half-a-billion-dollar bill.” That is not the way you do business in Ontario and that’s not the way you work cooperatively.

I mean, my goodness gracious, Premier Wynne continuously talks about having a conversation and working collaboratively. “Collaboratively”—I love the word; it has a lovely ring to it. Unfortunately, I’m not sure if she knows what it means, because when it comes to working with business, I don’t think she understands that to collaborate with someone means that you actually value

their input; you believe and accept that their opinion matters. But what you’ve done with Bill 91 is, you’re removing them from the equation and sending them the bill.

I understand that. As a father, I used to work that way. My kids are becoming more independent every day, but I still understand what it’s like to not have much to say but pay the bill. But they’re my children. I wanted to have them. I didn’t actually have them. You know what I mean? My wife did all the work—still does. God bless you, Vicky; thank you very much.

I only have a minute left, Speaker. Is the clock malfunctioning today? I only have a minute left and I want to impress upon the people on the other side, there is still time. There is still time and it’s Christmas. Christmas is a time to open up your heart and ask yourselves, “Are we doing this for selfish reasons, to try to pander to get some votes, or do we really care what matters and what happens to Ontario over the next several years when it comes to waste diversion?” You have failed. The record speaks for itself; you cannot deny it. Your record since you’ve been elected has been dismal, abysmal, worse. So as we enter into the holy season, the Christmas season, I ask you to take a look at this bill and ask yourself, “Is this really what we need to do?”

I believe there are many things we can do to improve it. Do we have to improve our waste diversion rate? Absolutely. Are we going to do it with your plan? Not likely. We need to sit down with Michael Harris, sit down with industry and get this done right.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It’s always a pleasure to be able to stand in this House. I have to say that it is quite a challenge to follow the member from—where is Mr. Yakubski from? Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. He is one of the most entertaining speakers in the House. And on one area that I do have to agree with him, that he is not the only one whose wife did and still does all the work. My wife is in town this weekend and I’d like to acknowledge that our spouses do a lot of the burden of a political job.

But on a lot of other things, I didn’t quite agree with the previous speaker. We do have some serious misgivings about the waste diversion authority, because it is once again an example of an organization that, without a lot of supervision and direction, could go astray and cause the people of Ontario, the taxpayers of Ontario, the businesses, a lot of trouble.

As this bill moves forward to committee, we’re going to have to be very cognizant of that fact, because we’ve had examples from this government—Ornge and eHealth—where this government has allowed the power of government to leave these halls without supervision. That ends up costing people a lot of grief and a lot of money. In this case, it could cost a lot of jobs, and that’s something we have to be very cognizant of and make sure that we keep our eyes on that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, I hope that the member from Renfrew–Nipissing feels better now. He's got it out of his system, and for the rest of the day he will undoubtedly be much more positive about the world around him.

I always say that we all have a different role to play here and there are some very tough jobs in this place, but absolutely the toughest job for any of the members here is to be the environment critic for the Conservative Party. How it's possible that the Leader of the Opposition could have asked that new father, Michael Harris, to be the critic—that young man deserves a lot better than that. That's all I've got to say about that.

Speaker, what this bill is all about is making the producers of material, once its life cycle is over and done with, responsible for the proper disposition of that material. It could be put into new products; it could be recycled; it could be reused. That's the only way it's going to work. Why should society be burdened with all the material that has been produced by producers once its life cycle is over and done with?

What we've traditionally done is make municipalities responsible for it. We used to call them dumps. Now they're landfill sites, or there are some other fancy names we use basically for dumps. We just put it in the ground, contaminate the soil, quite frequently, and contaminate the waterways etc. What this act does is give the government much greater control to make sure that producers do the right thing and get rid of the materials in a proper, environmental fashion.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Oxford and the member from Renfrew.

Hon. John Gerretsen: That's what the bill is all about, Speaker.

We haven't done well enough in this province with respect to recycling. We should be doing a lot better than 30%. This bill is going to accomplish that, because it puts the government in charge of making sure that all of this material is recycled and reused in a proper fashion. I hope the member opposite understands the real nature of this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I listened carefully. In fact, I sat beside the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, and he summarized the bill very thoroughly, I think, also thanking Michael Harris and his staff for dissecting and restructuring Bill 91.

This morning, the Coalition for Effective Waste Reduction in Ontario appeared in the dining room, and many members, including the member for Peterborough and I, had breakfast with a couple of the people who were there. They widely represented all the industries in Ontario, and they presented some options for the government. I'm going to read from their release this morning. The effective waste recovery in Ontario organization contributes "315 billion and 908,000 jobs to the Ontario economy."

They had a joint submission, and in it they said that, "Bill 91 presents significant risks for businesses across the province." They went on to say that Bill 91 would "create unnecessary costs, confusion and complexity." This is the industry; this is not political. These are jobs in Ontario speaking in a single voice, under this organization, saying that Bill 91 "would transfer substantial additional costs of end-of-life management to producers, while at the same time locking producers into arbitrary relationships" with no controls. They were also very unhappy with the idea that the eco fee cost recovery would be buried in the price of the product and there would be absolutely no accountability. They were more than displeased.

I want to put on the record that we sat with, I think it was, John O'Leary from Coca-Cola, as well as Jeff Van Damme, who is general counsel for Samsung, Ontario, Canada, I gather. They were very professional and very concerned. I think Mr. Leal would have recognized that there was an opportunity here for the government to stop this, get it right, work with Michael Harris and his staff and do the right thing, because our side wants to provide transparency and accountability. This does not do that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The member from London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you, Speaker. I want to reiterate the sentiment of my colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane that the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke certainly woke us all up this morning. You probably had a good breakfast downstairs, because you show that you have lots of energy when you're debating. He's got a good fight in him, regardless of what he fuels himself with.

0920

Speaker, he mentioned his wife, and I want to add that in too, because I'm a woman in politics. The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane and also the member from Renfrew–Nipissing mentioned that their spouses hold down the fort. They're at home, making sure everything works smoothly. Being a woman in politics—my husband and I both work together to make sure our home runs smoothly, so he takes part in the responsibilities. It's an interesting partnership. So it's different how a woman in politics maybe has that dynamic at home and a man in politics has that dynamic at home.

Anyway, saying that, Speaker, getting back to the topic at hand, I was downstairs as well meeting the business people, and I had breakfast with Michelle. She was one of the representatives there from the food and consumer products. She was saying that they approached the government about making sure that there's facilitation between municipalities and the business industry in recycling. They feel there's an important issue there that needs to be discussed. They need to define those roles as to funding models and how much participation the reduction industry business will have in setting up the programs of the municipalities and how things are recycled. That was one of their concerns.

I hope this government does take that into account, because she felt that there needed to be more consultation,

more conversation about that, to make sure that both parties that really play a major role in the reduction of waste were at the table. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has two minutes.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane; the Attorney General; the member from Durham, my colleague John O’Toole; and of course the member from London–Fanshawe. We both share granddaughters by the name of Lilli, too. Isn’t that interesting?

I listened to what the Attorney General said, and I must say that I would like to be in a happier mood but I can’t agree with what he said, because there is nothing in this bill that is going to bring about a reduction in the amount of waste going into landfills. There’s nothing in there. This is a reassigning of the deck chairs, as I said, on the Titanic and moving the bill over to the industrial-commercial side and away from the consumer and the municipalities. So there’s nothing that actually compels this to happen. But if we did sit down with this group of people—the manufacturers, the retailers, the producers, the wholesalers, the beverage people, all of these people that produce a significant amount of waste—and said, “The time for talk is over. It is time for some concrete action on how we’re going to reduce waste,” and get that input, but establish targets that are reachable and enforceable, we would do a whole lot more to reduce the amount of waste going into our landfills.

Also, the reality is it’s time to stop talking about landfills; it’s time to start talking about real ways of getting rid of waste, as they’ve done it in Europe and the Americas for years. It is time to seriously look at efficient, non-polluting incineration, energy from waste. That is the future; that is the key. This government was opposed to it from the start. They’re starting to look at—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I am pleased to rise here today to talk about Bill 91 and what it means to our province and what it means to those who are already having a very difficult time in Ontario as producers. This morning, I had an opportunity to sit down with some colleagues as we discussed this bill, and it became very clear to me in some of the conversations that have happened that this bill is going to place an economic obstacle on the backs of many of our producers. In fact, one of my colleagues said that a major television production company—not in terms of TV shows but in terms of producing the actual television itself—is thinking about picking up and leaving Ontario because of bills like this and something else we’ve been talking about this last week, which is high hydro rates. This is another example of how the government in Ontario, particularly this Liberal government, wants to put forward their own social engineering practices at the expense of Canadian and Ontario businesses, and then wants to force them out of the province because of these catastrophic policies. I say to you, Speaker, that that is not the way we want to proceed in

Ontario. We actually have to have far more rational, reasonable approaches to these, and I think my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, my seatmate, did give an excellent synopsis of where this bill has its failings.

I do take exception to what the Attorney General had said in terms of this being a very difficult file for Conservatives. I couldn’t disagree more. We are the party that brought in the Blue Box program. We are the party, under Brian Mulroney, that stopped acid rain from coming into this nation. And we are the party, under Elizabeth Witmer, who was the first and only person to close a coal fire gas plant—after this government, after 10 years in office, continued to miss their targets.

So I must say to my colleague Michael Harris, who is not here today because he is with his family after the birth of his beautiful little son, Lincoln Lloyd, that he is doing a tremendous job. He’s making us all very proud, and he makes it look like it’s easy. I know he’s working hard. I see his assistant Shane, one of the hardest-working staff members at Queen’s Park, here today making sure that this debate continues and that we have all of the concerns on the table for Bill 91.

Speaker, I want to point out to you that this is a government that has used the environment file to abuse our economy. This is the party that brought in the eco tax. Remember that, Speaker? I’m sure you can’t forget it; I won’t. They decided to bring in a whopping new tax on almost everything, by government regulation, on Canada Day a couple of years ago. People would end up going to Home Hardware to pick up a bucket of paint and they’d find this brand new tax. They would pick up a television at their local Best Buy and they would find this brand new tax. In some cases, it was doubling the purchase amount. That’s what this government has done and this is what they want to do with Bill 91. They want to make sure that consumers are going to see a rise in their price because they are unfairly taxing Ontario manufacturers and businesses, those who produce the goods that we purchase.

So this is their attempt at environmentalism. Their attempt at environmentalism is taxing those who serve our communities. We simply don’t agree with that, Speaker. That’s why I’m going to call for adjournment of debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Nepean–Carleton has called adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say “yea.”

All those opposed, please say “nay.”

I believe the yeas have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 0928 to 0958.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Order. Members, take your seats.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I’d like a little order, please. Are we all done? Thank you.

Ms. MacLeod has moved adjournment of the debate. All those in favour will please stand and remain standing until the Clerk's office records it.

All those opposed, please stand and remain standing.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 22; the nays are 30.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I declare it lost.

Further debate? Ms. MacLeod.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Speaker. I appreciate this opportunity to continue the debate on a bill that shouldn't actually be before this House. It is the wrong bill. I see the government House leader leaving. He's embarrassed by this bill. I think that we need to continue to discuss what we could actually bring forward in meaningful legislation on the environment. This is not the bill.

My colleagues are very upset with this. They have a variety of different mechanisms they would like to employ in order to improve this legislation or replace this legislation on the floor of the assembly.

I want to reiterate my comments to the Attorney General, who at one point said that as Progressive Conservatives it's hard for us to have a sound environmental policy. I think we all know that isn't true. I reiterate the defence of my colleagues on the blue box. I reiterate the defence of our party on the acid rain treaty. I reiterate our position on the coal-fired plants. We were of course the first to ensure that didn't happen.

I'd actually like to talk a little bit about smoking. That might be a health effect rather than maybe a purely—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: —effect, but it was Norm Sterling, a friend of mine, a former MPP, who was the first to bring in non-smoking legislation in Ontario—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): We've got about 10 little sidebars going. I'd like a little quiet so I can hear the member, please. If you have a little discussion you want to have, you know you can go through those doors and take it outside. Thank you.

Continue.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks very much. We have a couple of demands that I would like to reiterate in the time I have left without being interrupted by the Liberals.

We believe we need to remove the authority sections from the act. We believe we need to remove the intermediary sections, the provision to set up government-mandated monopolies, like we have now. We believe we need to remove sections 44 and 45, which will force businesses to hand over 100% of the funding for the blue box with no control. We believe we need to phase out the Liberal eco tax programs now.

We have always said that those eco taxes were wrong. I remember standing in this assembly upstairs, waiting for someone from the government to show up to work on July 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 in the year 2010 because they hid that eco tax from the public, and all of a sudden it

showed up on their prices. I remember that. I remember the Toronto Sun and the Ottawa Sun running big expositions against the eco taxes that this government snuck through by regulation and cabinet authority. That isn't right. In fact, I would say it's downright illegal, but they did it. We're here to say to the public again that as Progressive Conservatives we will unite again to try and defeat that eco tax. We will try and remove that from the sticker price and the price tag when they are at the cash register.

Speaker, I remain committed, as I know our colleague Michael Harris, our critic, does. I know my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke spoke in a very comprehensive way about the challenges we feel this bill places on business owners across the province. By the way, it is anti-business, but it's also not pro-environment. It's just shifting the price tag around. It's all well and good for this government to say they have plans and that they're doing something, but they're not really—this is not an environmentally friendly bill. It is a business killer, yes, but it is not environmentally friendly.

We think it's just going to continue the eco taxes and create new taxes to fund a bigger bureaucracy, but it doesn't do anything to improve the state of our environment here in Ontario today. They maintain the opposite view from us and they're going to continue their efforts to advance this destructive bill. If passed, the proposed law would continue all the Liberals' eco tax programs and create new ones to fund the expansion of the province's recycling agency, Waste Diversion Ontario. Waste Diversion Ontario, remember, is the agency that approved each and every single Liberal eco-tax-imposed program on Ontario consumers, yet it answers to no one. When we ask the Liberals in this House, "Why did you do this?" they like to point fingers. It's a never-ending game of pointing fingers at every other agency and every other person, and no one takes responsibility.

I must say this to you, Speaker: Ontarians are tired of this Liberal government not taking responsibility. Whether it's eco taxes, the HST, gas plants or hydro rate increases, they like to say, "Oops, I did it again. Let's blame someone else and let's not take responsibility." The only time they're going to take responsibility is when the voters of this province enforce that responsibility on election day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: It's always an honour to rise to speak to the bills in this House. Now, I talked about this bill awhile back when I had my 10 or 15 minutes on it, but in the last week or two, I've actually heard from a company in my riding. It's called RMC; it's a raw materials—they're actually a battery recycler, and they have some real concerns about this bill. They are in favour of waste diversion. They're certainly in favour of recycling. They've been recycling batteries in my riding since 1985. Their company actually employs 50 full-time employees in Port Colborne. But they are concerned about some pieces of this bill that are actually going to impact their operations in a negative way, that might even put them out of business.

Now this company has invested \$3 million into their business in the last three years, but they're concerned about the way that this recycling process is going to roll out and that it will truly impact their business. I think that we need to make sure that whatever we're doing here is going to have some balance, that it's going to actually work to create more diversion, but that it isn't going to put businesses out of business, because we've lost 300,000 jobs in this province and I really can't afford to lose 50 more in my riding, and I don't think the province can afford to lose any more jobs as well here in the province.

I think that when this bill gets to committee, we're going to have to make some really good amendments to it and not leave it all to regulation and to some agency that we have no authority or oversight over.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I listened intently to the remarks from my colleague. The member from Nepean–Carleton had the opportunity this morning, with all members of the House, to join what I thought was a very productive breakfast reception in the dining room talking to many people who are very involved in this industry, and sitting at the same table as the member from Durham and the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka and the member from Nepean–Carleton—one of those kind of ecumenical type of breakfasts this morning where everybody comes together.

I had the opportunity to chat with my friend, John O'Leary, from Coca-Cola. Coca-Cola has a wonderful manufacturing operation in my riding of Peterborough in Minute Maid. So anybody in North America today who starts their breakfast with Minute Maid orange juice and oatmeal from Quaker Oats in Peterborough knows that it's going to be a great day in Ontario, when you start your day with those two fine products.

I must say we had a very frank discussion. They raised some very valuable points and I made some notes on how we look forward, as this bill goes forward.

I want to recommend to everybody that there was quite an interesting editorial in last Sunday's Toronto Star, talking about this particular bill; it's interesting. The bill does contain some very positive elements that were suggested by the member from Kitchener–Conestoga. We look forward as this will process down the road.

So just, as I said, have Minute Maid orange juice in the morning, made in Peterborough, have Quaker Oats in the morning to start your day, made in Peterborough, and, of course, part of Ontario's dynamic manufacturing sector. As I said, it was an opportunity, and I had the chance to chat with these people.

I thank the member from Nepean–Carleton for her remarks this morning.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: First off, I'd like to thank the member from Nepean–Carleton for giving an extremely insightful view into Bill 91.

As the member from Peterborough would know, I was also at the breakfast this morning, and it was very enjoyable. As I, however, meandered around the room and was meeting various individuals in the manufacturing sector, in the effective waste reduction coalition, one thing became quite apparent to me, and that's the fact that what this government has done with Bill 91 is going to drive more jobs out of this province.

1010

It seems to be a pattern that we've witnessed, particularly in the last couple of weeks. We've heard of Heinz having to relocate and close down; 800 jobs in Leamington have left the province. The member from Peterborough alludes to Coca-Cola and Minute Maid being produced in Peterborough. Well, those jobs, Minister, are probably going to leave the province very shortly if this government is to remain in power.

What we saw is the fact that energy costs have skyrocketed under this government. When we listen to the manufacturers in Northumberland–Quinte West, they're telling me the same thing.

I heard it over and over again this morning, that these policies that the Liberal government are bringing in under the guise of environmental protection and "it's good for the people of Ontario" and clean air—what they're doing is actually driving people out of this province and finding jobs in other jurisdictions, whether it be in Alberta, western Canada, Ohio, Michigan, wherever.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thanks to the member for Nepean–Carleton for her debate on this Bill 91.

Speaker, there are concerns on this bill. We all have concerns. We've heard the concerns from the Conservatives. We've heard concerns from the NDP. But there's one item, too, that the member from Nepean–Carleton brought up, and it was the authority. There are certainly concerns about the effectiveness and the transparency of the new Waste Reduction Authority.

We know that there has been a lot of talk and debate about this government's oversight over many departments, health being one of the huge ministries in particular that has lacked a lot of oversight because of where that authority may lie. But, Speaker, right now, the prosecutors are responsible to the Attorney General, and the Attorney General has voiced concerns that if this structure is changed, they could be subject to political interference.

So we need to make sure that if we're going to change the structure, take it away, is it the right approach—we have to ask ourselves, Speaker—for the Ministry of the Environment to transfer the authority, the enforcement powers, in order to ensure compliance of producers and recycling, or is the enforcement better done by the ministry itself? Because there is that oversight now with regard to authority on that, and the Attorney General is right now the one who is accountable to the Legislature. I think that's where the authority should remain, and those are the questions that I've heard about oversight and how

this is going to be effective. If we're going to change the authority, is it the right way to go?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Nepean—Carleton has two minutes.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It is an absolute pleasure, once again, to join debate on Bill 91, and it is always a pleasure, Speaker, as you are well aware, to place your views onto the floor of the assembly.

I'd like to thank all of my colleagues for their thoughtful interventions throughout this debate. I think it's important that we have the opportunity to discuss our views on this particular piece of legislation.

I do take exception, however, to the comments made by the Minister of Rural Affairs—a very nice man, of course. But he was at the same table that I was at, and I think that it was reflected by the people who were at that table—of course, the majority of the views there were Progressive Conservative views, but even from the stakeholders—of the concerns of this piece of legislation.

I think what we have to understand in this province, in this particular moment, is that in order for us to not even create jobs anymore but maintain the ones we have, we actually have to have a comprehensive industrial policy, a comprehensive energy policy that is working within that integrated approach—then, from there, a good environmental policy, one that doesn't prohibit job creation, but one that augments it.

That is not what this legislation does. In fact, I look at places like Coca-Cola or Sony or any of those other companies that are agri-food producers or what have you. They are actually going to be penalized for setting up shop in Ontario under this legislation. This is the second time I've had to speak about this in a week, because the energy policies of this government have also penalized companies from coming and investing into Ontario. So if we are to talk about comprehensive reform on the environment, we must actually take this into consideration when we are putting forward environmental policy.

The second thing is—and I want to conclude on this—this bill really isn't about environmentalism; it's about taxation, and when that happens, we have lost the focus of what's really important.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. It being 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Steve Clark: The Coalition for Effective Waste Reduction in Ontario hosted a breakfast reception this morning for MPPs and staff and are in attendance during today's question period. They represent the views of manufacturers and retailers whose products are obligated under the proposed Waste Reduction Act, Bill 91. Collectively, they represent 40,000 businesses operating in

Ontario, contribute more than \$315 billion and 908,000 jobs in the Ontario economy—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Would the member take his seat, please.

I'm not amused. We have gone through this before. Please introduce your guests. Thank you.

The member from Toronto—Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to welcome to Queen's Park members of the Ontario Principals' Council: Larry O'Malley, Sandra Stewart, Frank Palumbo, Ken Arnott, Laura Romanese and Peggy Sweeney. Welcome to the chamber.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It gives me great pleasure to introduce my senior employee in my Oakville constituency office, Mr. Steven Muir.

Mr. John O'Toole: Speaker, I'd like to welcome a regular guest here every day. Alfred from the Trinity-Spadina riding is here to observe question period, as he's done for the last several years across the province of Ontario. Welcome, Alfred.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'd like to add some more folks to the list of members of the Ontario Principals' Council who are with us today: Bob Pratt, who is the president—welcome, Bob; John Hamilton; Susan Ferguson; Brian Serafini; Mary Linton Brady; Ian McFarlane—I'm not sure where Ian is. Also, somewhere around, I believe, are Larry O'Malley, Frank Palumbo, Sandra Stewart and Ken Arnott.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'd also like to welcome Susan Ferguson to Queen's Park today. Susan is the principal at North Lambton Secondary School in my riding. Welcome.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'd like to welcome the students from École Saint-François in Welland who will be sitting in the public gallery this morning. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'd like to introduce Joanne Kaatari, co-executive director of Community Literacy of Ontario; and Shelley Harris. They're both the 2012 and 2013 literacy award winners. It's Shelley's birthday today. Happy birthday.

Speaker, I'd also like to welcome members of OUSA who are here to join us today: Stephen Franchetto and Seth Warren from Wilfred Laurier University; David Campbell and Spencer Graham, both from McMaster; Cooper Millard from Brock; and Leigh McDougall from the University of Waterloo.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome a number of members of the Coalition for Effective Waste Reduction to the Legislature today. We have Brandon Ashmore, Michelle Saunders, Gary Rygus, Shelagh Kerr and Brian Prendergast here.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to welcome Jennifer Moser to Queen's Park. It's her first visit. Please welcome her.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to introduce the grade 5 class from Abbey Lane Public School in Oakville that is joining us today at Queen's Park.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: On a point of order: I'd like to wish my dear friend and the member from Oxford, Ernie Hardeman, a very happy birthday today.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That definitely does not upset me.

The member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex on an introduction.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm not sure if he has arrived in the chamber yet, but I'd like to introduce Cosmo Mannella, the business manager for LIUNA, Ontario Provincial District Council. Welcome to Queen's Park today, Cosmo.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We've got five students from Western joining us today: Patrick Whelan, the president of the students' council; Jasmine Irwin, VP communications; Sam Krishnapillai, vice-president, internal; Spencer Brown, vice-president, finance; and Amir Eftekharpour, vice-president, external, and president of the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance. We're delighted to have them here today.

Mr. Jonah Schein: I want to welcome to the gallery today the family of Maya Joy Parkins-Lindstrom: Sarah Whitham is with us today, Jennifer Parkins, George Lindstrom and Kelly Parkins-Lindstrom. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On behalf of the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, for page Yong Da: mother Wilma Wang and father Yao Li are in the public gallery today visiting their young son.

Also in the Speaker's gallery—

Interjection: Where's Joe?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's my other brother.

Representing Elgin—Middlesex—London in the 37th, 38th, 39th—and for the 39th Parliament, Speaker of the House—Steve Peters.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I don't mind them asking for Joe as long as they don't ask for you to come back here.

Anyway, it is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

JOB CREATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Premier, I hate that I have to continue to pester you about this, but you and I made a deal two months ago—

Interjection.

Mr. Tim Hudak: —she says I don't—then I think you know where I'm coming from. I've asked the same question almost every day. Two months ago, you and I agreed that we'd clear the decks on some secondary bills before the House in order to give you a chance to bring forward a jobs plan. I want to remind you, Premier, that

there are only about eight days left until this Legislature rises for the Christmas break. I've asked you day in and day out where your jobs plan is, as you promised.

Unfortunately, on Monday you brought forward your long-term energy plan, a continuation of Dalton McGuinty's failed energy policy. I'm asking for a jobs plan; you gave me a job loss plan. Premier, we can do a—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question.

Mr. Tim Hudak: —than this. Will you bring in a jobs plan before the Legislature, the House, rises before Christmas? When's your plan coming?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I really just want to go to the premise of the Leader of the Opposition's question, because when he said we had that conversation about moving pieces of legislation ahead, that's exactly true. The second part, which is him basically asking us to adopt his plan, was never part of the conversation, Mr. Speaker.

I said all along that we had a plan. We needed to move legislation through the House, but we have a plan and I've spoken about it many times. I've talked about investing in people. I've talked about the skills that people need and making sure they have those supports. We talked about investing in infrastructure, and it would be great if the opposition would join with us in strategic infrastructure investment, including transit and roads and bridges.

I've talked about creating a business environment. At the manufacturers and exporters meeting last night, it was very clear that the plan that we've got in place is one that they support.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, I didn't clear the decks for the good of my health. I did it so you would bring forward a jobs plan, as you said you would. You could take our plan; I welcome you to steal it. You could take Don Drummond's plan. You could take Roger Martin's plan. I don't care what plan you take, as long as you bring forward a plan to grow our economy and put people back to work in the province of Ontario.

Here's the question I have for you: We've lost 300,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs. As you know, Premier, that pace of loss has accelerated under your leadership. If you do get a job in the province of Ontario, the odds have doubled that it's a minimum wage job. You said when you became Premier that you wanted to create a fair society. Premier, what is fair about creating a society with public sector "haves" and everybody else working for the minimum wage?

1040

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think we understand that the Leader of the Opposition's plan would include slashing services to people, taking tens of thousands of people out of the services that they deliver to residents of Ontario, to citizens, in education and health care.

But, as I've said, we have a plan in place. Part of that plan is creating a business environment, a dynamic busi-

ness environment, so that businesses can thrive, and part of that strategy is the small businesses act, which will come back from committee today. My hope is that the PCs would work with us to pass the bill before the House rises so that 60,000 businesses can benefit from that break on their payroll taxes. I hope the Leader of the Opposition would see that that is part of a plan to create jobs and support business, and that they would help us move that legislation through.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I don't think the Premier is getting a fair enough grasp on the reality that families are facing across the province of Ontario. Minimum wage jobs have doubled as a proportion of the workforce. We've lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs. I know that facts are stubborn things, but they are reality.

Premier, the concern I have is that you continue to give more giveaways to the government unions, with wage and benefit increases that they don't dream of in the private sector. The vast majority of jobs that we've lost in manufacturing were private sector union jobs, so how do you justify to the union worker who used to work at John Deere making a good salary, who is maybe working at a part-time minimum wage job, that his taxes have to go up to pay for your giveaways to the government workers? How do you justify to the Heinz worker, a union worker who's lost his job, that you're going to give more giveaways to people like Chris Mazza?

It's not fair; it's not just. It's no way to build a fair society when you have public sector "haves" and everybody else—my plan will grow more jobs across the economy.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What I hear from the Leader of the Opposition is wedges being driven between people. What I hear is division being sown among people who have certain kinds of jobs and people who don't have those kinds of jobs. What I hear is a plan to slash public services, to take people out of public service and education and health care—and we're not going to do that.

What we believe is that it's very important to make the investments that will allow business to thrive, and it's very interesting that the Leader of the Opposition talks about low wages when his labour policy, his so-called right-to-work policies, would actually drive wages down across the board. It would be a race to the bottom, and that is not where we're going. That is not the kind of Ontario that we envision on this side of the House.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: It's a pretty basic rule of economics. You increase demand. You have more people who want to set up shop, more job creation

in Ontario. That means wages rise. That means that middle-class incomes increase, more people working. You don't seem to grasp the basic premise of economics.

I'll ask the Premier, is her plan working when the wages for Heinz workers are going to zero, when they've gone to zero for John Deere, when they're shipping Camaro from Ontario to Michigan, Equinox from Ontario to Tennessee? Premier, your plan is bankrupting our province, and it's hollowing out the middle class. We can do better than this.

I ask you, Premier, what is fair about a society where the only job you can get is a minimum wage job? You're the one that's divided our province. You're the one that gave unaffordable increases to some and tossed the rest out of work.

My plan is to grow the economy, put people into good jobs, entrepreneurs back in business, to actually have a rising tide for all so that we can protect the things we are about. That's my plan. I just ask you, where's yours?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. The member from Durham will come to order. The member from Northumberland will come to order.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think that the Leader of the Opposition needs to look to the jurisdictions where the kinds of policies that he is espousing have been put in place, Mr. Speaker, to see what happens to wages, to see what happens to the quality of life, to see what happens to the general well-being of people who rely on services and their ability to sustain their families.

That is not where we're going. We are not going to pit people against one another. We are not going to slash services across education and health care and across government. That is not what we're going to do. We are going to work with the private sector as we have been doing with Toyota, Ford, GM, Green Arc Tire Manufacturing, newterra, Pillar5 in Amprior and Lambton Conveyor in Wallaceburg. We're going to work with the people of Leamington as we bring them together and figure out how to make sure that food processing actually expands. That is the goal that we have set in place. That is our plan and those are the supports we're putting in place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from Burlington.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: My question is for the Premier. Premier, a new survey from economic development consultants, Development Counsellors International, looked into American executives' views on expansion markets. DCI found that when companies look to expand in a new jurisdiction, the two most important factors driving site selection are operating costs and workforce quality.

Premier, your government is driving skilled labourers out of province. Our energy prices continue to skyrocket. Taxes are multiplying. Red tape is costing us billions every year, and you tell us that this is the new normal. What sort of message does that send to potential investors?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment is going to want to weigh in, in the supplementary.

Let's just talk about energy prices for a second, because I think it's a very instructive area. As I say, when I was at the manufacturers and exporters meeting last night, there was some really high praise for the long-term energy plan because what business is looking for is reliable energy and reliable electricity infrastructure. That's what they said, and it's too bad that all the members here weren't there to hear that. I know some were.

According to the National Energy Board—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shouting somebody down—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Cambridge could wait a minute so that I can speak.

Shouting somebody down is not polite.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to talk about residential and industrial rates. Industrial rates in northern Ontario are among the lowest in Canada, and lower than 44 American states. Industrial rates in southern Ontario are lower than in Alberta, Michigan, New Jersey, California, and they're in line with states like New York, Virginia and Tennessee. So in fact our rates are competitive. I think it's worth noting that when the Leader of the Opposition was asked if he could promise lower rates, he said, "The answer is no on that."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: You told the CME last night you were going to be their cheerleader. They don't need a cheerleader; they need a leader.

Premier, your talking points are one thing, but let's look at the reality. DCI learned that location decisions were driven by cold, hard data. They told government to stop focusing on feel-good marketing and answer one simple question: Can business be profitable here? If there isn't a business case for investing in Ontario, businesses will bet on another market. Well-run businesses look for well-run provinces.

Premier, do you really think that investors will overlook the fact that your finance minister can't explain how he's going to eliminate the deficit, or that you have no plan for jobs and the economy?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: When I talk to members of the CME, they tell me that they're sick and tired of hearing from the official opposition talking down our manufacturing sector, because they're so proud, as we are, of the strength of this sector, especially at a time when the CME and their members are trying to encourage young people

in this province to join the manufacturing sector, to join the skilled trades and to become technical people and work in this advanced manufacturing sector, especially at this vital time where we're trying to encourage them.

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The official opposition may not know this—I know they're being political in a lot of this discussion, but I don't understand why they continue to talk down the sector and discourage our young people from entering into a viable sector that has 700,000 people working in it today, which has some of the best companies. In terms of the investment potential as well, we have the number one destination in North America per capita for foreign direct investment. These companies are coming here. I wish you would stop talking down this sector, because it's so important to Ontario's economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question. The member from Toronto–Danforth.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

New question. The member from Toronto–Danforth.

ENERGY CONTRACTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. To the Premier: Does the Premier agree that transparency and accountability in our electricity system are more important than ever as bills continue to climb?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I do, and I have said many times from the moment I came into this job that I wanted to open up the transparency around the way we do business, particularly on siting large energy infrastructure. But, Mr. Speaker, I think that the long-term energy plan speaks to that transparency and that openness going forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the Premier: Last year, the private nuclear firm Bruce Power missed a key deadline in their contract, and under the terms of the contract the government signed, Ontario ratepayers were entitled to a significant rebate in the price they paid for power. One estimate says the government could have taken \$500 million a year off our bills. Why didn't the government enforce the contract?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, we're very proud of the job that Bruce Power, as well as Ontario Power Generation, is doing in delivering nuclear across the province of Ontario. The contracts that we have are subject to negotiations on a regular basis because issues come up, and our people in the Ministry of Energy deal with those in a forthright manner in terms of resolving issues that come up. If you look across the whole energy sector, there are issues that will come up with power producers, with power consumers relating to price, relating to contracts. They're negotiated in an open, forthright manner, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, Speaker, neither the Premier nor the minister answered that question.

Last year, the government said they had independent reports to back their decision. For over a year, New Democrats have been asking for details of those reports, and for over a year the government and Bruce Power have refused to share details. The government passed up an opportunity to get a half a billion dollars back from a private power company. Why can't we see the details that justify that decision?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated, there are issues that come up in negotiation of contracts. Sometimes they can be made public; sometimes they can't. What I will do—I'm a new minister for the last number of months. I will look into the issue and I will report back to the member in terms of getting additional information on the specifics of this particular issue. I'd be happy to meet with the member.

ENERGY CONTRACTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Back to the Premier: Ontario's auditor has already said we paid far more than we should have in the private power deal with Bruce. The government had an opportunity to dramatically lower costs and pass half a billion dollars in savings on to families and businesses. The government didn't do that, and they won't share the reports that would explain why. Does the Premier understand why people paying the highest hydro rates in Canada might expect a little more transparency?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Energy has said that he'll work with the member opposite on the specifics of the information that he is looking for.

But it seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that this member in particular might want to make some statements on what he supports in terms of energy planning going forward, because the messages that have been coming from the party have been so conflictual—they have not indicated what they support. What we know is that they don't support nuclear, they don't support our green energy plans, they don't support investing in the refurbishment of nuclear and they don't support investing in the distribution of energy. So I would have thought that the member opposite would have wanted to let the House know and let the people of Ontario know what the NDP plan is. We haven't seen that, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, Premier, you clearly don't want to answer these questions.

The government was pretty clear this week: They plan to negotiate additional private power contracts for the refurbishment of six more units at Bruce starting in 2016. Given the high cost and lack of transparency associated with the contract, can the Premier offer any assurances to families and businesses worried about new costs and a lack of transparency?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the refurbishments will require procurement, and I would ask the member, if he were standing over here, would he tell the people who are going to compete for those jobs what the cost of the contract will be, or would he allow a competitive process to take place so that we'll have competition to lower the price and give value to taxpayers? He continues to criticize private power in this province.

Mr. Speaker, we have a hybrid system here. When they were in power, the NDP signed something like nine contracts for gas plants, which are still operating in this province. They were part of the hybrid system. The hybrid system is working. They generate not only good value for taxpayers, but the private sector is creating thousands and thousands of jobs in the energy sector.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Oh, Speaker. Ontarians are paying the highest electricity bills in Canada, and they see a government that doesn't seem to care. They added \$1 billion to hydro bills in their ill-fated gas plant adventure in Mississauga and Oakville. They added over \$100 million to hydro bills, moving ahead with nuclear plans that they were going to have to scrap in any event. Now people learn that the government could have pursued Bruce Power for billions in savings and decided not to, and they won't share the information that would justify that decision. Does the Premier think that that's acceptable?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I would like the third party to share with the people of Ontario what their policy is on electricity pricing. The leader of the third party has indicated that she will not commit to reducing power prices. The Leader of the Opposition has said he will not commit to reducing power prices. Power prices will continue to increase, Mr. Speaker.

But, if we want to look at what the National Energy Board has done in terms of research for everybody in this room, according to the National Energy Board—first of all, our plan is predicting, over 20 years, an average increase of 2.8%. Alberta, over 20 years, is predicting 3.7%. BC is predicting 3%. Manitoba is predicting 3.2%. Quebec is predicting 3%. Saskatchewan is predicting 3.3%. What is your percentage for your party? Tell the people of Ontario.

CHRIS MAZZA

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Minister of Health. Speaker, on Monday of this week, the Minister of Health told us that she hadn't read the forensic audit report into Ornge. In fact, she hadn't even opened the envelope. Yesterday, she told us it was the interim report that she read, but she hadn't read the final report. She denied that she intentionally withheld that report from the public accounts committee, and then sent her staff on a spin mission to the press gallery to tell the press gallery that all of the information in that report had already been submitted to the public accounts committee.

Speaker, that is an intentional move on the part of this minister to mislead not only us, but the media—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Order.

The member will withdraw.

Mr. Frank Klees: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish your question. You're on the last 10 seconds.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, it's obvious we're not going to get the answer here, so I want to put the minister on notice that I will be filing a motion with the public accounts committee this afternoon to call her to testify under oath at the committee's next—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

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Hon. Deborah Matthews: I look forward to that opportunity, because I do think that the member opposite needs to get his facts straight. On December 21, 2011, I learned what Dr. Mazza took from the taxpayers of this province in a single year. A single year was enough for me; that was game, set, match. I immediately called a forensic audit because I wanted to understand what was going on in that organization. Several weeks later, I received an interim report from that forensic audit team. Again, that was all I needed to learn, and that's when I sent that to the Ontario Provincial Police. The police took it from there. They are doing their job.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: It's very clear the minister has much more to learn, and that is what is really going on at this committee. A motion was filed this morning to get that report that the minister did not read. What's at issue now is the minister's credibility and her competency. After more than two years of public hearings, after more than 50 witnesses, the most we can get from this minister is equivocation. We don't believe the minister. Nobody believes the minister. That's why we want to meet her in the committee room and have her testify under oath next Wednesday morning at 9 o'clock.

Will the minister commit now to appear before the committee at 9 o'clock next Wednesday morning?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I look forward to appearing before the committee because I think it's important that committee members and the people of Ontario understand what actually happened in this case.

I took immediate action. When I found out one year's income for that doctor from the taxpayers of this province, I took immediate action. I called in the forensic

audit team. Within weeks, he was gone, the entire board was gone—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Stormont, come to order.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —new leadership was in place, and the OPP were investigating.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Halton, come to order.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Perhaps the member opposite thinks that that wasn't enough—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Stormont, second warning.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —but, Speaker, I tell you, there was complete change at Ornge, and I'm proud of the work that the new team at Ornge is doing.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please.

New question.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Since your announcement of your long-term energy plan this week, we've had a number of calls in my constituency, and I'm sure it's the same in other constituency offices across Ontario. A 33% increase over the next three years in hydro rates is going to force people on fixed incomes to move out of their homes. I'm getting the calls now where people are saying, "Listen, I can't make ends meet as it is now on my fixed income. If my hydro rate goes up 33%, and I know my property taxes are going up right behind that, I can't afford to stay in my home."

Can you tell me why it is that you're intent on raising rates so high that people have to move out of their homes as a means to support themselves in retirement?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: This government has had three primary issues in the energy sector: We want a reliable system, we want a clean system, and we want an affordable system. We get AAA+ on reliability and making it clean. We cleaned up the mess that was there. We got rid of coal.

There are significant pressures on pricing. This new plan, over 20 years, will see an average of 2.8%. But in the meantime, in the short term, there are still pressures. We still have the 10% discount clean energy benefit. I spoke publicly to the media yesterday on a number of—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton Mountain will go to her seat so I can tell her to stop.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —encouraging consumers to call their local distribution companies to get Peaksaver Plus. The study has been in that that has proven to reduce con-

sumption by 9% for individuals. They can call their distribution company. There's no cost to install it in their home, and they can reduce the price.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, you know that that doesn't wash with people back home. What people know is they get a hydro bill every month and the hydro bill is going through the roof, and they're looking at you and saying, "What? Another 33%? I can't take it," is what they're saying.

Here we have an email from a woman from Dryden who writes the following, and of course my glasses are—isn't that hilarious? My glasses got stuck. Sorry.

I have an email here from a woman from Dryden who writes the following: "With the increase in hydro, property taxes and insurance, we've decided to get our home up for sale. We can't afford to live here anymore on a \$566-a-month Canada pension and what my husband got in RSPs."

People can't afford to pay. Why, then, are you increasing rates by 33%, knowing it's going to force people out of their homes?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I think it's important to understand what the NDP voted against. They voted against the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit. They voted against the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit. They voted against the Northern Ontario Energy Credit, the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program and the SaveON-energy Home Assistance Program.

There are a significant number of factors that the people in northern Ontario, in Timmins and Thunder Bay, can access to reduce their rates, including using the Peaksaver Plus, which will provide an additional saving for them. If they use all of these benefits, particularly those people on low income, their rates will be reduced significantly.

LABOUR MOBILITY

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is to the Minister of Labour. In my beautiful riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, the ability to work and do business in both Ontario and Quebec is an important part of day-to-day business. There's a large amount of cross-border trade between Ontario and Quebec, and my constituents view the towns on either side of the border as neighbours, as one region.

A labour bill on mobility was debated earlier this session and was brought forward by the opposition. That bill was presented as a solution to interprovincial trade issues, when in fact it would have built barriers between our two great provinces. We all know that closing doors and putting up walls isn't the answer.

Speaker, through you to the minister, can you tell us, Minister, what the ministry is doing to help improve labour mobility between Ontario and Quebec?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for his advocacy on behalf

of his community and especially in eastern Ontario on this very important issue. He and I both know the labour mobility agreement between Ontario and Quebec has meant more jobs, more investments and more opportunities for Ontario workers in Quebec. We know that we have to work together to fix problems, not create new ones. That's exactly what we have been doing.

A few weeks ago, we held the first labour mobility agreement round table in Ottawa. This event brought representatives from business and from labour. There was a Ministry of Labour representative there, the Jobs Protection Office, the College of Trades and others to identify and discuss issues that are facing workers and businesses and to find solutions by working together. The round table was a great success and it just shows the progress we can make when we work together instead of working to divide.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Minister, for your response. It's great to hear that you and your ministry are taking concrete action on this issue. I know that my constituents will be pleased to hear that we're working together with our partners for better results instead of working to build barriers that would only harm or prevent interprovincial labour mobility.

Ontario is open for business, and we know that many people came out strongly against the bill when it was before this House, such as—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe North, come to order.

Mr. Grant Crack: —John DeVries, president of the Ottawa Construction Association; Jim Watson, the mayor of Ottawa; and Richard Hayter and the Eastern Ontario and Western Quebec Building Trades Council.

Speaker, through you to the minister, could you please tell us more about your round table and what the reaction was?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: It was a very good and productive discussion. Like I said, we had representatives from all sides of the issue, and we were really able to talk about experiences and how things have improved since 2006.

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One of the messages I heard very loud and clear was that both the construction sector in eastern Ontario and labour do not want to build a Berlin Wall between Ontario and Quebec. They want to make sure that we continue to work together to enhance the labour mobility agreement so that more opportunities, more jobs can be created for Ontario businesses and Ontario workers to work in Quebec.

As a result, we had a very productive discussion. As a result, we have a good sense of where we want to move forward. We'll be working closely with specific sectors to address some of the concerns so that when I do sit down with my counterpart from Quebec, we can find proactive ways to enhance that agreement and create more opportunities for Ontario businesses and workers.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Premier. Premier, we agreed to clear the decks so you could finally bring out your jobs plan. But what did we get? Bill 91, another dangerous economic experiment that you say will create jobs. You made the same claim with the Green Energy Act, and look what happened: You killed thousands of well-paying manufacturing jobs across the province.

Now you're about to do the same thing with Bill 91. And what's your logic? You say that imposing a half a billion dollars in new costs on businesses will create so-called green jobs.

Premier, I have a simple question: Have you done any economic impact analysis whatsoever on how many jobs Bill 91 will kill in the manufacturing sector?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of the Environment.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, no. It's not on. Order.

Minister of the Environment.

Hon. James J. Bradley: On one hand, you have a critic getting up, saying that somehow, the recycling level in the province of Ontario is not satisfactory. We did widespread consultation with virtually everybody—municipalities, the private sector, individuals, environmental groups. We put together a piece of legislation that was subjected to a lot of discussion before it even came to the House, and did analysis of what the impact would be by listening to those who made the representations. There is a broad coalition of people out there under the umbrella of the Ontario Waste Management Association that happens to believe that this bill is absolutely essential. They're wondering why your party, having come forward with a plan that resembles this plan very closely, has now decided, for partisan political purposes—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: I can't believe what he said—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Attorney General will come to order.

Mr. Steve Clark: Premier, I just want to point something out to you: The Auditor General reported that for every so-called green job that's created, four more are lost somewhere else in our economy—but I suppose you wouldn't know that because the Liberal government never did a proper economic impact analysis on the Green Energy Act.

Your reckless policies are driving jobs out of this province, and now we have Bill 91, a bill that will raise prices for consumers and kill well-paying manufacturing jobs.

In September, Heinz wrote to your government, pleading with you to do an economic impact analysis on Bill

91, but they never got an answer, and now they're gone. Premier, how many more manufacturing jobs are you prepared to send out of this province just so you can try another one of your dangerous economic policies?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex will come to order. The member from Prince Edward—Hastings will come to order; when he gets to his seat, I'll remind him a second time.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister responsible for seniors has found that magic moment again for me to bring attention to him. He will come to order.

Minister of the Environment.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, one can always count on the Conservative Party in this House to take an anti-environment stand on each and every issue there is—every time. If it comes to dirty air, they're in favour of it. If it comes to dirty water, they're in favour of it. If it comes to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. I have a feeling that some members are testing, and I'll pass the test.

Minister of the Environment, finish, please.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, I have met with people from a variety of backgrounds, a variety of organizations, a variety of businesses in the province of Ontario, who have made their representations. I have invited them, when the bill gets to committee—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Oxford will come to order. The member from Prince Edward—Hastings will come to order.

Hon. James J. Bradley:—ringing bells on every piece of legislation it can before this House. I have invited those individuals to come to committee to make their representations and to offer their amendments. That is something they have welcomed, and that is something I look forward to with great anticipation.

CHRIS MAZZA

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Mr. Speaker, it seems unbelievable, but the fact is that when it comes to the Minister of Health's explanation for why she didn't expose Dr. Mazza's real salary, the explanation keeps getting worse and worse. The minister has stated that it was the responsibility, somehow, of opposition MPPs and the media—unlike her, we didn't know the figure—to ask for the figure. It's deeply concerning that after months of front-page headlines, and as a result of a minister who is not doing her job, she is continuing to fail to do her job in terms of oversight. Will the minister

admit that it was her job to expose the salary of Dr. Mazza and that she is the one who failed to do so?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, as I said earlier, on December 21, 2011, I learned what Dr. Mazza took from the taxpayers of this province. That was enough for me: one year's salary. That was it: game, set, match. I called in the forensic audit team. I think that was the action that the member of the opposition would expect I would do.

When the forensic audit report came—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Renfrew, come to order.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —I read that interim report—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew will come to order—just in case you didn't hear. Finish.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I read that interim report. By that time, Dr. Mazza and his entire board were gone, and I referred the matter to the Ontario Provincial Police. That was the right action to take. That is the action of a minister doing her job.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Yesterday, the minister was playing games when it came to explaining the facts, and it seems that she's doing the same thing again today. Let's be clear: The full details of Dr. Mazza's real payout were only included in the auditor's forensic report. The forensic report had the full details of his salary. This report was never handed over to the committee that was studying this issue. It was only the minister who was given this forensic report, and the minister chose not to read this report. She admitted that she didn't read this report.

When will the minister stop blaming everyone else and admit that it was her fault that we are again knee-deep in another scandalous story involving her ministry?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's important to take the time to understand what information has been provided to the committee. The committee requested information; they received that information. They received the answer to the question from the member from Guelph, who wanted a list of all compensation paid to Dr. Mazza. That information was provided to the committee, part of it publicly available, part of it in sealed envelopes, because it was personal information. That information was tabled a year ago. Also tabled with the committee was the interim report, the report that I based my decision on when I called in the OPP. The committee has the information.

CHILD CARE CENTRES

Mr. Steven Del Duca: My question today is for the Minister of Education. I was pleased to learn yesterday about the steps that our government is taking to strengthen oversight of the province's unlicensed child

care sector while increasing access to licensed child care options for families.

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I'm even more pleased to learn that our government has placed a priority on reforming a piece of legislation that hasn't been reviewed in 30 years. Over the last year, we've all seen heartbreaking tragedy in my community of Vaughan within the unlicensed sector. I understand that much of the proposed legislation is aimed at addressing oversight within the unlicensed sector that could help prevent such a tragedy from happening again.

Speaker, through you to the minister, can she please describe how this legislation will improve and strengthen oversight in this sector?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to the member for Vaughan for raising this important issue.

The member is absolutely correct. This legislation is overdue for a comprehensive update. That is why, well over a year ago, we began to consult with parents and stakeholders on how to update the legislation.

I'm proud of the legislation which was tabled yesterday in this House and which, if passed, will improve oversight in the unlicensed sector. If passed, it will allow the province to immediately shut down a child care provider when a child's safety is at risk. It would give the province the authority to issue administrative penalties of up to \$100,000 per infraction by a child care provider. It would also increase the maximum penalty for illegal offences under the act from \$2,000 in the current act to \$250,000 in the new act. It would increase the number of children a licensed home-based child care provider can care for from five to six, and it would require all private schools that care for children under four to have a licence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I thank the minister for her response. I also know that our government has already taken steps to improve the oversight of child care. These include a dedicated enforcement team to investigate complaints against unlicensed providers and the development of an online searchable database of validated complaints.

Speaker, through you to the minister, can the minister please share with this House why this piece of legislation is critical and why it needs to move through our legislative process as quickly as possible?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Another excellent question from the member from Vaughan.

As the member pointed out in the previous question, the current piece of legislation that governs child care, the Day Nurseries Act, was enacted in 1946 and has not been comprehensively updated since 1983. Speaker, that's 30 years ago. The legislation does not reflect the current needs of our children and parents.

The Child Care Modernization Act would help transform the child care and early years system to better meet the needs of both the parents who use and rely on the system and the children who are placed in its care.

Speaker, I was pleased to hear yesterday from both parties in the House their acknowledgement and understanding of the importance of this legislation. Both of them seem to think we need this legislation quickly, and I hope they will both support and help us to pass the legislation quickly.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Premier, as you know, I'm from Niagara, and I'm proud of that. While a lot of folks rightly associate tourism with Niagara, I'd argue, from where I grew up, that manufacturing has been the backbone, the strength, the fabric of our middle class. Niagarans would always make things, sell them to the States and sell them to the world. It made it a great place to live.

Unfortunately, under your policies, believe it or not, in Niagara we've lost two out of five manufacturing jobs, jobs that had been there before the Liberal government. Now two out of five have gone: John Deere, Edscha of Canada, Redpath Sugar, DMI Industries—sadly, I could go on and on.

I've got a plan to bring 300,000 well-paying advanced manufacturing jobs back to our province, including the Niagara Peninsula. I want to fight to rebuild that middle class. Why do you, instead, persist on policies that are making Niagara's greatest export manufacturing jobs across the border into the States?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The centrepiece of the plan coming from across the floor is right-to-work legislation that would drive wages down, that would drive quality of life down, and we're just not going to do that.

The other part of his plan is to cut services across government, to take tens of thousands of people out of those services in education and health care that are so necessary for people in the province.

We believe that if we make the investments in people that are needed, make sure that the skills training is available, that the education is available, so we close that gap between the jobs that are available and people who are looking for jobs, if we make the investments in infrastructure—and I think the member opposite would agree that infrastructure is very important to the Niagara region. If we work to create that business environment, like passing the small businesses act, we would make the conditions right for businesses coming to the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: But, Premier, if you believe that infrastructure is the path to success, why did you kill the mid-peninsula corridor? Why did you end that project if you actually believe that new highways create jobs?

One of the first jobs I had was at Pratt and Lambert. It's a paint factory. It helped pay the bills for school, for university. But we've seen industry hollowed out: DMI Industries in Fort Erie, Jarvis Street Pharma—those are hundreds of jobs that no longer exist. In a small town like

Fort Erie, where I'm from, that's a massive economic impact.

To rub salt in the wound, your government chose to take industrial land along the Queen Elizabeth corridor out of commission. You said they couldn't create jobs there.

You have two choices, since you have no plan: You can take our plan, or you can take the NDP plan, which is going to increase hydro rates, is going to increase taxes and bring in more red tape, like Bill 91, and is going to cost us jobs. But for goodness' sake, pick a lane, pick a plan. Mine will bring jobs back to the province of Ontario, rebuild our middle class and give hope to those in Niagara who are losing—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The plan coming across the floor would precipitate a race to the bottom, which we are not going to engage in, Mr. Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition talks about infrastructure; we're going to build the right infrastructure. So in terms of new roads, we're not going to build new roads for the sake of building new roads. We're going to make sure that the corridors that are already in place are being used appropriately, that we've got the transit that we need, that we've got HOV lanes and HOT lanes that are going to give people choices and are going to use the existing corridors to the very best advantage.

But the fact is that the Leader of the Opposition doesn't support initiatives to clean up the air. He doesn't support initiatives to clean up water. He doesn't support initiatives to preserve land. So building roads willy-nilly is consistent with his plan.

That's not what we're going to do, Mr. Speaker. We are going to make the right investments in the right parts of the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of the Environment will come to order. The member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex is warned.

New question.

PERSONAL HEALTH INFORMATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Speaker, it's been a week since the minister learned that Ontarians are having their personal health information shared with Homeland Security agents of the United States. My question is simple: How could this be happening?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I welcome the opportunity to speak to this issue. I spoke to the Information and Privacy Commissioner, Dr. Ann Cavoukian, yesterday, I believe, or the day before. We spoke about this issue. I agree with her that it is completely unacceptable that personal health information be shared in that way. It is contrary to our legislation, PHIPA legislation. The Information and

Privacy Commissioner is looking at this issue, and she and I have agreed to co-operate.

But I think it's important to note that our ministry does not, in fact, even have that personal information. It is not information we collect. Therefore, it is not information we could share.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm happy that the Information and Privacy Commissioner responded so quickly to my letter and is working—Ellen Richardson was willing to take her story public, but my office and the minister's office have heard from other Ontarians who have had the same experience but do not want further breach of their privacy.

All Ontarians need to be assured that their personal information is never shared without their consent. When Ontarians see privacy cracks in their health information, it is the confidence in the health care system that crumbles.

I ask again, can the minister explain to Ontarians how their personal information was shared with Homeland Security and assure all of us that it will never happen again?

1130

Hon Deborah Matthews: As I said, the Information and Privacy Commissioner is taking this issue very, very seriously. She is working to find exactly the source of that information.

I can say with assurance that US authorities do not have access to medical or other health records for Ontarians travelling to the US. As I said earlier, we do not have that information, so we could not share it.

But I completely agree: It's imperative that the Information and Privacy Commissioner does find out how that information is being provided. I think Ontarians deserve to know that their personal health information is kept private.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Joe Dickson: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. December is already here and families are preparing for a holiday season. A common tradition celebrated by families in Ajax-Pickering is going to their local market or store to buy a freshly cut Christmas tree. Being that Saturday, December 7, coming up is National Christmas Tree Day, many Ontarians will be out this weekend looking for that perfect Christmas tree. I expect a choir to sing here.

Here in Ontario, we are fortunate to live in a place with over 71 million hectares of forest, with about 85 billion trees, including the balsam fir, a perfect choice for a Christmas tree. We have access to many options for Christmas trees here in Ontario, and we encourage everyone to buy local.

Can the minister tell us how buying a local Christmas tree will help support jobs here in Ontario?

Hon. David Orazietti: I want to thank the member from Ajax-Pickering for the question. On a little lighter

note and in the spirit of the season, I'm pleased to tell members of the House about MNR's Ontario wood program, a great initiative to raise awareness of the benefits of purchasing a Christmas tree for the holiday season. When you're buying a locally grown tree you're helping to support businesses and an economy in Ontario that's very important to the province.

There are about 500 Christmas tree farmers in the province and there are over one million Christmas trees harvested each year by these Ontario tree farmers. The sales amount to about \$5 million annually in direct sales. It takes about eight to 10 years to grow an 8-foot Christmas tree, depending on the tree species. When one tree is harvested three are planted so that there's always a sustainable crop here—this is very important. The continued harvesting and planting of these trees is great for the environment. The trees are 100% recyclable and biodegradable.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Joe Dickson: Buying local is very important to my community. I thank the minister for letting us know about the benefits of buying an Ontario-grown Christmas tree.

Many of my constituents will be happy to know that buying a freshly cut Christmas tree helps support jobs. The minister mentioned the Ontario wood program that was launched by the ministry. What is important is that a program like this helps to provide jobs year-round, not just at Christmastime.

Can the minister please tell us how we and all Ontarians can support the Ontario wood program all year round?

Hon. David Orazietti: Again, thanks to the member from Ajax-Pickering. This industry is so important to Ontario's economy, and the Ontario wood initiative launched by MNR in 2011 helps to bring greater notoriety to the importance of Ontario wood and wood products. The program is designed to recognize the importance of this natural resource and encourage Ontarians from across the province to think about the benefits of buying wood products locally.

Ontario's forest products industry is a significant contributor to the economy. Most recent figures show that Ontario forests support 180,000 direct and indirect jobs across the province, valued at \$11.9 billion. It's a renewable resource that literally builds our province.

In buying Ontario wood, consumers are helping to support these jobs and they're helping to boost the forest industry, which has certainly faced significant challenges in recent years. Less than half of 1% of Ontario's forests are harvested each year by law, and they're required to have a plan in place for harvesting

DEER HUNT

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources, as well. Minister, Thursday last, I updated the House on the controversial four-day deer culls taking place in the Short Hills Provincial Park. Last week, you stated that there were conservation

officers, Ontario Provincial Police, as well as MNR staff on site to monitor the cull.

In light of next week's Auditor General's report, managing provincial parks in a cost-effective manner, what was the total cost to the taxpayers to have just 24 deer harvested in the Short Hills Provincial Park, where there's, comparatively speaking, thousands of deer harvested province-wide in a cost-effective manner at no cost to the taxpayer?

Hon. David Oraziatti: I'm pleased to respond to the question and share some of the comments that were made last week when the question was originally asked. The member knows this is about First Nations treaty rights. The member knows that this is the Haudenosaunee First Nations exercising what are their traditional hunting rights in this particular area, and there is a cost to ensuring public safety.

I would say, as I've indicated publicly, that the individuals in this area who are expressing concerns should be expressing their concerns directly to the federal government. This is a treaty with the government of Canada and the Haudenosaunee First Nations.

The cost is estimated—and the member's asked for cost estimates—at around \$40,000 to ensure that there is public safety.

Speaker, I would say—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Quite frankly, this is nothing less than the deconstruction of a sanitized memory.

Minister, it was stated that there was a need to reduce the deer population of the park by 85%, yet the cull rate is 80% less than the statistical birth rate of deer, meaning that the population is constantly increasing by 30% per annum. Minister, do these stats mean that the people could expect the cull to continue annually and to expect an expanded cull in order to achieve the desired deer population?

Hon. David Oraziatti: Speaker, this has absolutely nothing to do with a cull. This is a hunt that is taking place by the First Nations. They're exercising their treaty rights. The member knows full well—he's raised the auditor as issue, in the report. I don't think the auditor is going to be interfering in the constitutional treaty rights of our First Nations. We're certainly going to be welcoming the report and looking to implement any of the recommendations that would be appropriate to do so.

The cost is one that the province is bearing with respect to public safety. It's important to ensure that there's public safety while this is taking place. Public safety is the priority, and this hunt was conducted in a safe manner. Perhaps we should be considering sending the costs and the bill, though, to the federal government and the RCMP for this. The member might want to take that up with some of his federal colleagues in Ottawa.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the Minister of Finance. In January, the municipality of Killarney

highlighted concerns with the new MPAC valuation method for provincial parks that would negatively affect tax revenues to the municipality. The lands in Killarney Lakelands and Headwaters Provincial Park, Killarney Provincial Park and French River Provincial Park are unpatented lands, and will become exempt from taxation. The municipality will see a loss in excess of \$649,000 in revenue, equalling one third of their tax base. What is the minister doing to work with municipalities so that they're not losing much-needed revenue?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you for the question. I do appreciate the concern that the member has raised. It's something that we are addressing, as well, working closely with the municipalities. As the member may also know, the parliamentary assistant to the Ministry of Finance has been working with MPAC to ensure that we do a proper review and protect the interests of the municipalities that are affected.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Again to the Minister of Finance: The MPAC evaluation system is wreaking havoc for communities across the province. The entire valuation system of parks were sprung on communities last year, which left them with shortfalls from previous years. Now the province is threatening to terminate payment altogether on unpatented lands, which would leave the communities with another huge shortfall.

What is the province planning on doing with the unpatented provincial park land, and how will this affect payments to communities?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I know that there is a continued need to have an ongoing discussion with our municipal partners to ensure that we get some of these initiatives correct and that we're fair, especially with the unpatented lands, because even some of those municipalities recognize that the neighbouring community is actually taking advantage of their services and resources that aren't being funded by the unpatented lands.

We've got to get fairness in the system, and I'd be happy to work with the member, as well, to ensure that the communities in the north and those affected rural communities are properly assessed and that we have a fair system for all concerned.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is to the Minister of Consumer Services. Payday loan companies are used by various people for several reasons, sometimes by persons in desperate situations who need quick access to funds. These operations offer services that are currently not provided by commercial banks, but they do raise concerns when it comes to consumer protection, as I've learned from the experiences of many hard-working people in my riding of York South-Weston.

There are protections for consumers set out in the Payday Loans Act. However, many Ontarians are not aware of these when it comes to using a payday loan company. My question is, what protections currently exist for consumers who use the services provided by these companies?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thanks to the member from York South–Weston for raising this very important question. It's important to remember that it was our government, in 2008, that brought forward one of the most comprehensive payday loans legislations in Canada. We did this very swiftly when this business was downloaded from the federal government. The act provides a tremendous number of protections to consumers, and it meets certain needs for consumers to have access to funds.

However, the industry has changed. We know that there is a lot of technology involved with accessing payday loans, and new products are being offered in this marketplace. Those are some of the reasons that I announced my review of the payday lending act, and we're committed to supporting consumers and supporting our economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1142 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

YOUTH SERVICES

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's a real pleasure to be able to stand here today and make a statement, specifically on those that came today to support Bill 88 in committee. I think it deserves recognition that some of these groups travelled far and wide to be able to be here today to have input into Bill 88, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act with respect to children 16 years of age and older.

To summarize, this bill actually fills a gap where 16- and 17-year-olds do not currently have the right to any child welfare services and, in fact, barely have any services available to them whatsoever. This is a major gap that is solely in Ontario compared to all the developed world. It's a gap that we haven't solved yet, and it's going to be a landmark bill if it goes to third reading. I urge the government to see it through to third reading. It is something that is very easy to support, and I hope that I can get their recognition of that.

Thanks to the Ontario Association of Residences Treating Youth; Pro Bono Law Ontario at SickKids; the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies; Our Voice, Our Turn, specifically Michele Farrugia and Kayla Sutherland, who are children's self-advocates; the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, Irwin Elman; Mapleview Community Church; Don Weber; Justice For Children and Youth; and the Canadian Homelessness Research Network at York University for coming and making contributions at committee today.

OLDER WORKERS

Ms. Cindy Forster: I rise today to comment on a program that has been successfully retraining older workers. A federal program called the Targeted Initiative for Older Workers program has assisted many unem-

ployed workers in Niagara, offering enhanced skills training and a transition to new employment.

A 64-year-old from my riding, Bill Johnston of Thorold, tried to apply so that he could actually re-enter the workforce after losing his job at a bankrupt Fort Erie pharmaceutical company. The program focused on older workers between 55 and 64 who are unemployed and require enhanced skills, and he thought it would be a perfect fit, but when he applied he was told he didn't qualify because he does not live in an eligible, vulnerable community.

After contacting my office, Bill asked for assistance. We learned the program would be winding down within six months. As one of the few successful action plan programs that the feds put out, it's frustrating to learn that, with the province's blessing, it ends on March 31, considering the current state of unemployment in this province. This government needs to stop the lip service on job creation and help the thousands of people in this province who are out of work and need the training to be successful.

My federal colleague Malcolm Allen is raising this issue in Ottawa as well. We hope that, if both levels of government work together, we can continue this good job creation and retraining program.

CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL OF EASTERN ONTARIO

Mr. John Fraser: I rise today in recognition of the incredible work being done by the staff and volunteers of the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, also known as CHEO, in my riding of Ottawa South.

This year's National Research Corporation Canada-Ontario Hospital Association patient ratings report ranked 27 institutions. Pediatric patients and their parents were asked to indicate their overall satisfaction with in-patient care, and CHEO achieved the highest ranking in the province. CHEO is also home to province-wide programs such as BORN Ontario, which is Ontario's perinatal network; Newborn Screening Ontario; and the Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health.

CHEO has been serving families in Ottawa and Eastern Ontario for almost 40 years. All three of our children benefited from the excellent care at CHEO, as have thousands of other children.

It has been said that CHEO is really an expression of what we all want for our children. Whether a child be our own, a grandchild, a niece or a nephew, or a neighbour, it's thanks to the dedicated staff and volunteers at CHEO that we find that expression. On behalf of families across Ottawa, eastern Ontario and, indeed, Ontario, I'd like to offer my congratulations for a job well done and thanks to the staff and volunteers for their hard work and their continued passion in serving the needs of our children.

LORNA BETHELL

Ms. Sylvia Jones: We've all met inspirational people in our communities who do exceptional work for others,

and today I'd like to share with you one such lady: Lorna Bethell of Caledon.

Lorna was an amazing woman who understood the need for quality palliative care in our community, and her passion led to the creation of Dufferin-Caledon's only residential hospice: Bethell House, in Inglewood. In memory of her husband, Tony, and her son Jamie, Lorna donated the land that would become the home of Bethell House. Now, if you asked Lorna, it took too long; but many of us regularly reminded her that without her spark, Bethell House would never have become a reality.

Lorna's enthusiasm for the project and her passionate leadership was driven by her own experience of caring for her husband at home. It was Lorna and Tony's vision that everyone, regardless of their circumstances, would have access to quality residential care in their final stages of life.

In 2010, after the opening, Lorna continued to be an integral member of the Bethell House family. She was often at the home, visiting with families and volunteers and hosting her popular weekly teas.

Lorna was absolutely the driver behind Bethell House, but when being recognized and honoured for her contributions, she would often turn the spotlight on other volunteers, family members and staff.

Her enormous compassion for others has left a lasting legacy, not only in the bricks and mortar of Bethell House, but in its heart and soul as well.

It is somehow fitting that Lorna passed away this week while representatives from Hospice Palliative Care Ontario were highlighting the importance of hospice care here at Queen's Park. I'm guessing Lorna would have liked that.

WESTON SANTA CLAUS PARADE

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Last Sunday, I had the pleasure of participating in the 34th annual Weston Santa Claus Parade. I was happy to march with over 50 different entries representing local small businesses, schools, community groups, service providers, and of course with Santa Claus himself. From Church Street to Sidney Belsey Crescent, along Weston Road, it was wonderful to see the community come together to celebrate the spirit of the season. In particular, seeing the faces of children and families from all different backgrounds light up as the parade went by showed the joy that this time of the year can bring.

The spirit of the season also extended to all those along the parade route who donated non-perishable food to the Weston Area Emergency Support food bank. I would like to thank all of those who gave a donation and supported others who are less fortunate in our community. It is important at this time of year to think of what we can do for others. That is what really brings us all together.

I would like to thank the Weston Village BIA for their continued effort in ensuring the Santa Claus Parade is a success; in particular, the chair, Masum Hossain, and the

parade coordinator, Marion O'Sullivan. And of course, I want to thank everyone who came out to watch or participate in the parade for bringing Santa to Weston.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to remind the House that the province could do more to support farm-based retail agribusinesses by reforming the property assessment rules for farm markets. The problem is that the farmer who shows initiative and establishes a market on his or her farm may be penalized by MPAC—we heard that yesterday in question period—and face a hefty property tax increase because of a commercial assessment change.

My riding of Durham is home to scores of farm markets, farmgate sales, on-farm stores, pick-your-own operations and CSA farms. From Algoma Orchards to Zephyr Organics, there are more than 55 farms and markets in the riding of Durham. They're all prize-winners, and they are all listed in the Durham Farm Fresh directory. These are farms, orchards and gardens where we can harvest the rewards of buying outstanding local food. This is unfair because there is little difference between farms that ship their produce to the consumer or those that encourage the consumer to come to the farm. In addition, these so-called commercial operations are often seasonal and should not pay the same taxes as year-round commercial businesses in cities.

1510

I urge the House to support local agriculture and rural Ontario by reconsidering how to apply commercial tax rules to farm-based businesses today in Ontario.

This is truly an attack on rural Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

HAMILTON URBAN CORE COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you for your indulgence, Speaker.

Today I want to make a statement on the Hamilton Urban Core Community Health Centre. Everybody agrees: Hamilton Urban Core Community Health Centre delivers the highest-quality care to marginalized and complex populations. They serve people who live in poverty. Many of them are newcomers; many of them are part of a racialized community.

Four different studies have been done about the care by Hamilton Urban Core, including one from ICES, and all of them agree: They do fantastic work and they keep people out of our hospitals.

The centre is old, overcrowded and has a problem with mould, and everybody agrees they need to move into a new facility. Now the LHIN says that they need to move into a facility that is smaller than what they have now.

In order to solve this problem, the LHIN had ordered an operational review. So far, all is good; the centre is

happy. Unfortunately, the approach that the LHIN has taken to make that review seems that they're bound and determined on finding something wrong with the centre, on finding an excuse to move the services away from those marginalized people who need this services. Staff have started to leave the centre or decrease their hours because of the action of that LHIN.

Everybody agrees that Hamilton Urban Core gives good care. They need a new facility. The minister needs to take responsibility and make sure that this happens.

BANGLADESHI HINDU COMMUNITY CENTRE

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: It gives me great pleasure to rise today in the House to share my experiences at a Bengali event that took place in the riding of Scarborough Southwest.

Toronto Durgabari is located in my riding on Birchmount Road and is a registered charity. Since 2009, Toronto Durgabari has played a very important role in the Bangladesh community. They provide social, cultural and religious support for both native-born Bengalis and to newcomers to adjust to life here in Ontario.

I attended an event on October 11, where I was greeted by over 300 people. I experienced fantastic cuisine and was lucky enough to be invited to take part in the festivities.

Although I have been to a number of Bengali events in my riding, I felt very welcomed by the Bengali community at this event, and I was even invited to take part in some of their dances and singing that occurred there. They tried to get me to get up and sing, Mr. Speaker, but I only sang one song and I made sure it was in English.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the organizers, including Shakti Deb, for organizing this event and for promoting their culture to the broader community in Scarborough Southwest.

REFORESTATION

Mr. Bill Walker: I rise today to recognize two constituents whose efforts are helping to make Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound even more green. Bill and Mable Almond of Meaford have planted close to 32,000 trees on 50 acres, creating a new forest to complement their hardwood bush overlooking the Niagara Escarpment.

Their tree-planting project was recently recognized by Trees Ontario, who bestowed the couple with a Green Leader award.

The Almond family is the second one from my riding to be named Trees Ontario's Green Leaders. The first was Georgina and Ron Klages of Chesley.

The Almonds began planting trees in 2012 as part of the Ontario government's 50 Million Tree program, administered by Trees Ontario, and then worked with the Grey Sauble Conservation Authority to prepare and coordinate the planting.

The goal of the 50 Million Tree program is to reduce carbon footprints, diversify Ontario's landscape, increase

wildlife habitat as well as improve soil and water conservation.

Speaker, I believe this award is very fitting for Bruce and Grey, reflecting on the region's proud history in furniture manufacturing. It was home to the Krug Bros. furniture manufacturing family, who owned the furniture factory, sawmills and bush farm in Chesley for 101 years and employed over 600 people at its peak. Despite the closure of the factory in 1987, the Krug family continue to be regarded as pioneers and leaders in the reforestation of Bruce and Grey counties.

Other notable furniture manufacturers that continue to play a tremendous role in the vitality of our beautiful rural communities are Durham Furniture in Durham; Bogdon Gross Furniture in Walkerton, in my colleague Lisa Thompson's Huron-Bruce riding; and GRS Wood Products in Chesley.

I'd be remiss, Mr. Speaker, if I did not mention Southampton Furniture Co., as it had once had a factory in my home village of Hepworth.

Of course, there are countless other constituents in my riding who employ good environmental and conservation practices every day by planting more trees on their property and being good land stewards.

This is why Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound is renowned for having the prettiest backyard and some of the most diverse outdoor opportunities in Ontario.

HERB EPP

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I believe that you will find that we have unanimous consent to pay tribute to Mr. Herb Epp, a former member of this Legislature from the former riding of Waterloo North, with a representative from each caucus speaking for up to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to do a tribute to Herb Epp. Do we agree? Agreed.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I feel so very honoured to have this chance this afternoon to say a few words about the outstanding public service of Herbert Arnold Epp, who cared so much for his community that he became known to everybody as "Mr. Waterloo." On behalf of our leader, Tim Hudak, and my Ontario Progressive Conservative colleagues, we welcome you, Jane, and the other members of your family who have joined us here today.

It's so appropriate that you are all here, for we remember Herb first and foremost as a family man, as good and decent a gentleman as this place has ever seen. We remember him secondly as a man whose devotion to his province and his vision of a better Ontario led him to seek election to this Legislature in 1977, after effectively serving in local government. But for Herb Epp, his family always came first.

Herb and Jane were blessed with two children of their own. David and Sarah grew up with their dad in politics, first as an alderman, Waterloo regional councillor, mayor of the city of Waterloo, and MPP for Waterloo North for

13 years, through four provincial elections, all of which he won. But Herb also had a distinguished career as a high school teacher before he was elected, and he was a successful realtor after he decided not to seek re-election to this place in 1990. But as we all know, he wasn't yet done with elected public service, and he made an amazing comeback in 2003 to be elected mayor of the city of Waterloo for another term, something like 28 years since he was first elected mayor.

While it turned out that Herb was departing the Legislature in 1990, the same year that I was fortunate to be first elected, I actually came to know him fairly well. Our first encounter was in the early 1980s, when I was still a student at Wilfred Laurier University in Waterloo and still open-minded enough to want to go and hear the Ontario Liberal leader, David Peterson, and the local MPPs, Herb Epp and John Sweeney, when they visited Laurier. I remember thinking that these two local MPPs, Epp and Sweeney, supporting their leader that day, were polished, professional and determined, and I was thinking that my beloved Tories were in for a tough fight in the next provincial election. I was right about that, and as it turned out, Herb had his opportunity to serve on the government side from 1985 on.

Through those years, he proved that a government MPP who works hard and is well-respected can in fact make a significant contribution and get a lot done. We can't all be Premier, and not all of us end up in the cabinet, but we know that it is the private members, people like Herb Epp, that are the foundation of the Ontario Legislature.

Applause.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Indeed.

He was chair of his caucus, chair of the all-party Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly, and parliamentary assistant to the Treasurer, Robert Nixon. He was heavily involved in the structural renovations to our assembly building, which had long been neglected, really threatening the physical integrity of the building.

He did a lot behind the scenes for his constituents, and with visionary zeal he pushed hard to ensure the long-term water supply for the communities of Kitchener-Waterloo would be assured and guaranteed. In this he was showing careful regard for the needs of future generations, not just looking out for his own interests in the next election. He was ahead of his time, thinking about the challenges we continue to face going forward managing our drinking water resources. No wonder that as long as his name was on the ballot in a provincial election, our party couldn't beat him.

His last opponent, in a provincial election in 1987, was my good friend Elizabeth Witmer. Elizabeth always said she ran in that election knowing she would lose to Herb but saw it as a learning experience which would help her plan a winning campaign the next time, which of course proved true as well. Elizabeth always had the highest regard for Herb as a person and as a politician. They became close friends as well. Elizabeth even hired Herb's two constituency assistants after she was elected

to succeed him in 1990. Can you imagine that happening today? But she never regretted it, because Herb's staff always wanted to put people ahead of politics, just like she did. Just like Elizabeth Witmer, his political philosophy was pragmatic and practical, with a focus on fiscal responsibility alongside a caring social conscience.

When he launched his political comeback and was re-elected mayor of the city of Waterloo in 2003, I was privileged to be representing the riding of Waterloo-Wellington, which included the townships of Wellesley and Woolwich, which were parts of his old riding of Waterloo North. We saw each other at many events in Kitchener-Waterloo, and I was always impressed by his warm kindness and thoughtfulness.

1520

There was nothing phony or artificial about Herb Epp, that's why so many people loved and respected him. As far as I know, he lived his life and made his career here without making any enemies, only friends, and friendships that lasted across party lines. He was who he was—nothing more, nothing less—a man who loved his family, loved his community and always sought to strengthen it, and with Christian faith, lived his life to glorify God.

He left us far too early, in February of this year. We share his loss with the family who he loved and who loved him so much.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further tribute?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It is my pleasure to speak today about the life and public service of the honourable Herb Epp, MPP for the riding of Waterloo North from 1977 until 1990.

Many of his friends and family are with us today: his spouse, Jane Epp; his children David Epp, Sarah Brown and Sparrow Snider Landry, Herb and Jane's chosen daughter; his daughter-in-law, Leigh Ann Epp; his grandchildren Camden Epp, Christopher Brown, Jessica Brown, Chilton Landry and Clover Landry; and his friends John Lambert, Doug Martin and Marion Martin, and Ruth Bricker and John Bricker. I think that their presence today speaks to the impact that Herb had on those who knew him, and I want to thank them for sharing him with us, with the people of Waterloo and with the province of Ontario.

I am thankful to have known Herb. He was an important part of the history of Waterloo. When I was first elected trustee, he invited the Waterloo trustees out for lunch and shared some of his ideas, and we discussed the need for greater collaboration between school boards and municipalities. Herb had a deep connection to his community, built during the time he spent serving his fellow citizens, and he appeared always ready to listen and learn if those ideas could translate into better services for his community.

I must confess, he had my full attention at this meeting until he raised his hands up. The man had huge hands. He had these powerful, strong hands that were, quite honestly, very distracting in that meeting, but it was actually a testament. He was a strong man. You knew that when you met with him, and you knew that his con-

victions were strong and that his passion for his community was always first and foremost.

And while I did not know him in his capacity as an MPP, I did know him as the mayor of Waterloo. He always appeared to have a sense of calmness about him. I rarely witnessed a loss of temper. He maintained his composure even in contentious situations.

This seems to be the right time to mention that Herb was a loyal Liberal. In fact, one of his former colleagues praised his dedication to his party as a reason for its success. He was described as: “[H]is dedication in serving in years when it was not maybe ... as easy to be a Liberal that we have prospered here in a political way....” But I would like to say that he didn’t ever let partisan politics prevent him from listening and from learning.

Herb’s service reflects something that has become a trend in Waterloo region. Local representatives listen and learn locally about the needs and priorities of the community and then take that experience to Queen’s Park, to this place, or to Parliament Hill. It’s a good model, and Herb served his constituents and community well.

Herb’s legacy as Waterloo North’s MPP is one of a thoughtful person, who was serious about his responsibilities and was engaged and active in working with his community. His years as alderman, regional councillor and mayor provided him and his caucus with expertise in municipal affairs, among other policy areas. He was complimented on his constituency work and on his right-in-the-field contact with people.

I did have the opportunity to speak to him before he passed, and he was very honest in his advice to me. He just said that if you love your community, it will show. And people always knew that Herb Epp loved his community. That was never, ever in doubt. Herb reflected the character of his riding when he was at Queen’s Park: a hard-working, quiet and entrepreneurial community. He knew how to avoid anyone taking advantage of that kindness, but always acted on a sincere desire to help people who needed help.

He was a prudent public servant, and in fact, he took a great deal of interest, in his last years working here at Queen’s Park, about the facility itself. He wanted the heritage of this building to be maintained because he knew how symbolic and important it was for us to put into action our values as politicians.

I think it’s safe to say that there aren’t a lot of people outside of this House and outside of our own lives who understand the sacrifice and the toll that politics takes on our families. I think it would be safe to say that his family knows this full well, because this was a man who gave of himself each and every day to his community at the local level and to his party at Queen’s Park. He was a loyal servant of the people.

I think that it is incumbent on me, as the new MPP, to say thank you to his family and to his friends and truly to convey a sincere sense of: Thank you for sharing him with us.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further tribute.

Hon. John Milloy: It’s a pleasure, a real honour, for me to speak on behalf of the Liberal caucus and the

government today in paying tribute to Herb Epp. I too want to extend my welcome to his family, which is here with us, and commend all the members who have given their statements, and also mention to those who want to pay respects to his family that we’ll have a small reception right after this in the government House leader’s boardroom.

Mr. Speaker, we’ve already heard from other members of the Legislature about Herb’s outstanding career in public service. As we heard, Herb had a long and distinguished career spanning three decades in public office, starting with his election as a city of Waterloo alderman in 1968, his election and subsequent re-elections as mayor of the city of Waterloo in the 1970s, his four terms in provincial politics as Liberal MPP for the former riding of Waterloo North and, finally, his triumphant return to municipal politics in Waterloo in the early 2000s.

I first met Herb, or Mr. Epp, as I called him back then, when I was a page here in the Legislature in the 1970s. I came to know him better through my involvement in young Liberal politics in high school.

Herb was part of a triumvirate of MPPs—referenced actually by my friend across the way from the Conservatives—who represented Kitchener–Waterloo. It included John Sweeney and Jim Breithaupt and later, upon Jim’s retirement, David Cooke. These were a group of individuals who cared deeply about the community, worked hard for the interests of their constituents and were men of great integrity. In fact, if you ever want to know why I’m an MPP today, or a Liberal, for that matter, it was because of this group of fine legislators that included Herb.

Little did I know back then that I would one day run for elected office or work directly with Herb in his role as mayor of Waterloo. My election in 2003 coincided almost exactly with Herb’s return to municipal politics. As the sole government representative from the region of Waterloo, I had the pleasure of working closely with him on a variety of local issues, as well as enjoying his company at countless community events, where he was always gracious with both his advice and encouragement.

Herb did a great job as mayor. He took over the leadership of Waterloo following a very difficult period. Quite frankly, there was a need to heal and rebuild the community, and Herb took on the task with great enthusiasm, helping to rebuild the confidence of a city that had suffered. Among his many legacies are the UpTown Waterloo Public Square, which remains an extremely popular focal point of activity in Waterloo region, and the beautiful new YMCA and library in west Waterloo.

At Herb’s funeral, which was attended by literally hundreds of people, a single theme quickly emerged in the many tributes that were presented in his honour. That theme was Herb’s optimism. Herb saw the best in everyone and the best in every situation. His enthusiasm, even in the most trying of times, was infectious and welcome.

I experienced Herb’s optimism on a regular basis. Herb and I remained in close touch even following his retirement from active politics. We were both members of the same Rotary Club, and we would see each other

often at the weekly lunch meetings. I always looked forward to seeing him, because no matter how badly the week was going, no matter how many controversies the government was mired in at Queen's Park, Herb would pull me aside and try to place the situation in a broader and brighter context. He would talk about our overall success as a government, praise whatever recent announcements I had made as a local member and, within a few minutes, brighten my mood and the day.

As others have said, Herb was a partisan without being overly partisan. He was a lifelong Liberal who, despite very ill health, emerged from his sickbed to cast a vote in our recent leadership race. He was always willing to offer a hand to younger candidates and provide advice and insight on how to put the best foot forward.

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But his respect for those involved in politics went well beyond Liberals. Herb understood public service as a calling and was always willing to offer advice and encouragement to any quality candidate, no matter their political leaning.

Although his career in politics ended in 2006, Herb continued his active involvement in the community. He proudly served as a member of the Waterloo-Wellington Airport Commission, the Kitchener-Waterloo Hospital Foundation, the board of governors of Wilfrid Laurier University and the University of Waterloo, the Catholic Family Counselling Centre, Family and Children's Services, the Greater Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber of Commerce, the Rotary Club of Kitchener-Westmount and the Canadian International Council, just to name a few. He was renowned for his energy.

One of Herb's great skills was fundraising. He was legendary. His enthusiasm and optimism made it virtually impossible to say no. In fact, the saying around town was that it was much better to have Herb selling tickets for you rather than to you.

In 2009, he became chair of the board of directors of the Canadian Landmines Foundation, an organization focused on raising funds and awareness for victims of landmines in war-torn countries. Herb was not only able to raise significant sums of money for the foundation, removing millions of landmines from around the world, but helped relocate its hub to Waterloo, placing it on a firm footing.

Herb was honoured many times by the community. Last year, he was awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal in recognition of his commitment to his community and many years of service.

Herb's passions were hockey and baseball. However, as others have said, his real relaxation was spending time with his family: his beloved partner and best friend, Jane, their children and grandchildren.

Herb was an exemplary role model for all of us. We unfortunately live in a time when politics and cynicism seem too often to go hand in hand. Many political practitioners often view politics as a game with winners and losers, in which the public is viewed almost as an afterthought.

As MPPs, I think we'd agree that we need to fight against this attitude. Luckily, we can look to the example of outstanding public figures like Herb Epp, a man of integrity, a man who fought for his constituents, a man who believed that our province's best days still lay ahead.

In the passing of Herb Epp, our province has lost an outstanding public servant; his family has lost a loving husband, father and grandfather; and for many of us in this Legislature, we have lost a great friend. On behalf of the members of the Liberal Party, I wish to sincerely thank Herb's family for sharing him with the people of Waterloo region and the province of Ontario and offer our deepest condolences.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their kind and warm, heartfelt comments. This is where it gets me all the time. When we remove the shackles of partisanship, we are at our best, and it's a bittersweet moment.

We thank you for the gift of your husband, your friend, your brother, your grandfather, father. As part of our gratitude, we will have the words of Hansard in a DVD of the tributes you heard today, so that you can know that he is held in high regard.

I thank all members.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes): Your committee begs to report the following bill, without amendment:

Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act / *Projet de loi 105, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'impôt-santé des employeurs.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 49, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to tips and other gratuities / *Projet de loi 49, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes*

d'emploi en ce qui concerne les pourboires et autres gratifications.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

STRONGER WORKPLACES FOR A STRONGER ECONOMY ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR L'AMÉLIORATION DU LIEU DE TRAVAIL AU SERVICE D'UNE ÉCONOMIE PLUS FORTE

Mr. Naqvi moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 146, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour / Projet de loi 146, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne l'emploi et la main-d'œuvre.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I'll make a statement during ministerial statements.

HUMAN RIGHTS CODE AMENDMENT ACT (AWARDING OF COSTS), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LE CODE DES DROITS DE LA PERSONNE (ADJUDICATION DES DÉPENS)

Mr. Hillier moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 147, An Act to amend the Human Rights Code with respect to the awarding of costs of proceedings / Projet de loi 147, Loi modifiant le Code des droits de la personne en ce qui concerne l'adjudication des dépens des instances.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Human Rights Code Amendment Act (Awarding of Costs): Currently, under the Statutory Powers Procedure Act, a tribunal is permitted to award costs if certain preconditions exist. The Human Rights Code is amended to provide for the awarding of costs by the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario.

SPIRITS OF COMPETITION ACT (LIQUOR LICENCES), 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR L'ESPRIT DE CONCURRENCE (PERMIS D'ALCOOL)

Mr. Hillier moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 148, An Act to amend the Liquor Licence Act to permit the retail sale of liquor / Projet de loi 148, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les permis d'alcool pour permettre la vente au détail d'alcool.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Randy Hillier: The name of the bill is the Spirits of Competition Act (Liquor Licences), 2013. The bill amends the Liquor Licence Act to allow manufacturers of liquor to obtain a licence to sell liquor that does not contain alcohol in excess of 15% to retail sellers of liquor that meet the requirements specified by the regulations under the act.

In turn, when those retail sellers apply for a licence to sell liquor, or a renewal of that licence, they can request that the licence not be subject to the conditions that presently apply to other licences to sell liquor; namely, the requirement that liquor sold must not be removed from the premises. A licence to sell liquor that is held by a retail seller is subject to the conditions that liquor sold under that licence shall not contain alcohol in excess of 15% and shall not be sold except during the hours of 7 a.m. to midnight local time.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order from the member from Simcoe-Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding Bill 111, An Act to amend the Law Society Act and the Solicitors Act; Bill 52, An Act to proclaim the month of April as Sikh Heritage Month; and Bill 15, An Act to proclaim First Responders Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe-Grey is seeking unanimous consent to put a motion without notice. Do we agree? I heard a no.

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STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Our government is committed to standing up for Ontario's workers, and that means strengthening workplace protections and increasing fairness for both employees and businesses. Therefore, it is truly a pleasure to rise for the introduction of our

proposed legislation, the Stronger Workplaces for a Stronger Economy Act.

Our government recognizes that, as our economy is changing, the nature of work is also changing, and that our rules have to keep up. This bill is about taking action to protect vulnerable workers and levelling the playing field for employers who play by the rules.

I want to thank both the United Way and the Law Commission of Ontario for joining me earlier today as I discussed this proposed legislation, and for spearheading both a dialogue around these important issues and for putting forward many thoughtful solutions which are reflected in this bill. It shows that out of positive conversations and constructive recommendations come real and meaningful action to protect Ontarians.

We are doing this because it is the right thing to do and is an essential part of ensuring that we help grow our province the right way. We're investing in our people by strengthening workplace protections and supporting a dynamic business environment that increases fairness for companies.

The world of work is changing. The number of temporary foreign workers in Ontario has risen from 91,000 in 2008 to 120,000 in 2012. Now is the time to act. Our proposed changes will help level the playing field for businesses and increase workplace protections to make sure workers are being treated fairly.

No one should ever have to surrender their passport or be promised a job that doesn't exist or be charged for inappropriate recruitment fees. That is why the proposed changes would amend the Employment Protection for Foreign Nationals Act our government passed in 2009 to apply to all temporary foreign workers in Ontario who are here through temporary foreign worker programs.

This would mean that temporary foreign workers would have protection against being charged recruitment fees and having personal documents, such as passports, withheld by employers. It will also require employers to give migrant workers information about their rights.

People in this province work hard, and at the end of their shift or rounds they deserve to be paid for that work. If they are operating a business, they deserve to know that their competitor is not undercutting them by not paying their workers.

Unfortunately, right now there are both time and monetary limits on claiming unpaid wages, so we are making it easier for workers to get the money owed to them by proposing to remove the \$10,000 cap under the Employment Standards Act on the recovery of unpaid wages through a Ministry of Labour order to pay.

That means employees would no longer be forced to pursue large claims through the courts, saving both workers and businesses time and money. If passed, Ontario will also increase the time limit for recovery of wages under the Employment Standards Act to two years, so older claims are dealt with fairly and workers get the money they are owed.

Our proposed legislation would require employers to provide a free Employment Standards Act handout to employees. A translation would also have to be provided

in a language requested by the employee, if available from the Ministry of Labour.

These new protections, if passed, will better protect workers recruited through temporary help agencies by establishing joint and several liability between agencies and their clients for failure to pay wages. This will help level the playing field for good employers. Clients of agencies would be liable for regular wages and overtime pay if the agencies don't pay up, encouraging those companies to use agencies that treat employees fairly.

We also know that safe workplaces come down to people looking after one another. The Ministry of Labour has been undergoing its largest transformation in the last 30 years, creating a culture that puts health and safety at the centre of every workplace—because our job is to make sure that workers go home to their families at the end of theirs. That is what people expect when they go to work or their co-op placement, and that is what they deserve.

Speaker, Ontario has very clear rules. If you're performing work for someone, you are entitled to rights and protections under both the Employment Standards Act and the Occupational Health and Safety Act. That means you must be paid at least minimum wage, no matter what your job title is or what you agreed to when you started working there.

The only exceptions are people who are self-employed, trainees or co-op students, or unpaid learners performing work for course credit as part of a high school, university or college of applied arts and technology program.

We know that co-op students already have the right to a safe workplace, and the Ministry of Labour has strong rules in place to ensure that all workplaces, including these co-op work placements, are safe. But they do not have individual protections, and that is not right. This bill, if passed, would extend the coverage of the Occupational Health and Safety Act to co-op students, trainees and other unpaid learners, ensuring that they have the same individual rights and protections as other workers. This absolutely makes sense.

To help proactively protect workers, this bill would also give the Ministry of Labour the authority to require self-audits of safety standards to extend our protections to more workplaces. Workers should never be asked to do the most dangerous jobs based on whether they are recruited through a temporary help agency.

Our government was the first in Canada to introduce legislation specifically addressing temporary help agencies in 2009 that made sure employees were not unfairly prevented from being hired directly by employers; prohibited agencies from charging fees to workers for such things as resumé writing and interview preparation; and required agencies to provide employees with information about their rights under the Employment Standards Act. Today we are building on that, because right now, these agencies—not the companies—are deemed to be the temporary worker's employer under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. Injuries suffered by temporary help agency workers while performing work

for client employers are attributed to temporary employment agencies who participate in experience rating programs.

This situation creates a potential incentive for client employers to contract out more dangerous work to temporary help agencies. If a temporary help agency worker is injured, the injury and related accident costs do not affect the client employer's premium, but rather negatively affect the temporary help agency's premium. The proposed legislation, if passed, would encourage client employers to provide and maintain safe and healthy working conditions for all workers in their workplaces, including temporary help agency workers.

Currently under the WSIB's experience rating program, an injury to a temporary help agency worker that occurs at a client employer's workplace is attributed to the temporary help agency, not the client employer. This situation creates a potential incentive for workers to be contracted out, as I mentioned. We are correcting this through this proposed legislation.

Finally, we know that construction is a key driver of Ontario's economy. Our government recognizes this, and as a result, we are investing \$35 billion in infrastructure projects over the next three years to create and support 100,000 jobs each year, growing our economy and building stronger communities. That's why we are strengthening the Labour Relations Act, the cornerstone of our fair and balanced labour relations system, by proposing to reduce the open period in the construction industry from three months to two. This will allow our skilled workers to spend more time building the roads, bridges, schools and hospitals to grow our economy and ensure a prosperous Ontario for generations to come.

Speaker, the proposed Stronger Workplaces for a Stronger Economy Act is about taking action to protect workers, especially the most vulnerable, and levelling the playing field for businesses that play by the rules. We want to ensure that employees are paid for the work they do and that temporary help agency employees are provided the fairness they deserve. We want to ensure that temporary foreign workers have the protections they need and deserve.

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At its heart, this legislation is about making sure workers get paid for the work they have done and giving businesses that play by the rules a competitive advantage. We can and must work together to protect the most vulnerable workers in our province for a stronger Ontario, as we are one Ontario.

INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER DAY

Hon. Michael Coteau: I rise today to recognize International Volunteer Day. The United Nations General Assembly created this special day back in 1985. International Volunteer Day is a chance for volunteer organizations and individual volunteers to promote their contribution to a better community and a better world.

Mr. Speaker, let's take a moment to say thank you to the six million volunteers here in Ontario who, day in and

day out, work hard to make sure that they're making a difference in our province. Six million volunteers: Collectively, they contribute nearly 900 million hours each year to making Ontario a better place.

That's a great reflection on the commitment of Ontarians to their community and to their neighbours. They generously share their skills and give their time to help strengthen their communities and our province. They are part of a rich tradition in this province that captures the very best of citizenship. These volunteers change the world. Their contributions result in a stronger economy, improved social outcomes and a stronger, more cohesive society. Today, I'd like to take this opportunity to celebrate their compassion, generosity and their commitment to service.

Ontario is fortunate to have this high level of civic engagement. To maintain and increase our level of involvement, it is important for us to recognize the contributions of volunteers. We must also find ways to promote volunteerism among newcomers here in the province of Ontario.

Our government recognizes Ontario's volunteers through a number of programs, including the Volunteer Service Award, the June Callwood awards, the Ontario Medal for Young Volunteers and the Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship. These awards recognize individual volunteers, groups, businesses and other organizations for their outstanding contribution to their communities and to their province.

This year, more than 10,000 Ontarians were recognized through the Volunteer Service Award. Recipients wear the trillium pins proudly. I know that many of my colleagues in the House here today participated in the 52 awards ceremonies that took place throughout the province this past year, and I encourage all members to do so in the upcoming year.

I am truly glad to say that the volunteer spirit continues to flourish among Ontario youth. This year, more than 38,000 young people participated in 617 volunteer events across the province through ChangeTheWorld, Ontario's Youth Volunteer Challenge. These young volunteers bring fresh ideas and energy to the organizations that they serve.

Ontario's Partnership Grants Program is a great example of how this government is building strong communities. The program has brought organizations across the province together to collaborate on 27 projects that will strengthen the not-for-profit sector's networks, build collaboration, and improve responsiveness to clients, communities, and stakeholders.

Our government is also looking at ways to help volunteer organizations tap into the skills and experience of our newcomers. Ontario receives nearly 40% of all newcomers who arrive here in this great country. When a newcomer volunteers, they help the organizations that they serve to reach out to a greater range of people. It's a true win-win situation.

I ask my fellow members to join me in saluting Ontario's volunteers in honour of International Volunteer Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from—

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Lambton–Kent–Middlesex.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. I always try to find the first letter.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: You didn't forget that this morning during question period, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I knew that for sure.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you very much, Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise to offer comments and feedback from the official opposition to the bill introduced by the Minister of Labour.

I can say that I think I have a good working relationship with Minister Naqvi. Of course, we disagree on some things, but I do want to thank him and his office for taking the time to talk to me about this bill and the changes that it will make here in Ontario.

Speaker, coming from a small business myself, the health and safety and protection of our workers is always top priority. Our family is pleased to work directly with Glencoe District High School for co-op placements, and those students are always put through a thorough orientation, including a health and safety program. In fact, I was pleased to meet previously with Minister Naqvi to talk to him about some of the concerns regarding interns and co-op students and wanting to ensure that these workers are properly protected and properly trained. I know some of these changes are included in this bill here today.

However, Speaker, when it comes to changes in the labour file, I'm sad to say that one thing this bill doesn't do is make any of the needed changes to Ontario's labour laws that we have been advocating for at Queen's Park and all across Ontario. This bill doesn't do anything to create jobs.

Looking at places like Indiana and Michigan and Texas, we're seeing manufacturing jobs created daily, and many of those jobs are companies relocating from here in Ontario. You've heard me say this before, but when we're talking about important changes to the labour file, I think it bears repeating that in the past 10 years, Ontario has lost over 300,000 manufacturing jobs, but at the same time we've added over 300,000 government union workers. Speaker, these numbers are scary. I think everyone here would agree.

Instead of introducing a bill that would start to make the changes necessary to get Ontario growing and help create jobs, the government is refusing to make the bold changes that people all across this province are begging for, and the government is refusing to offer Ontario workers the flexibility of modern labour laws like those being enacted throughout Europe, Australia, New Zealand, the UK and in the United States.

Of course, there's a lot in this bill, and I and my colleagues look forward to reviewing this bill and to further debating this bill right here in the House.

INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER DAY

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to rise on behalf of Tim Hudak and the PC caucus to recognize International Volunteer Day, which we commemorate on December 5 every year.

Back home in Prince Edward–Hastings, we've got a special event every year that recognizes key volunteers and contributors to the community. The Guardian Angel Gala is put on every year by the Quinte Children's Foundation in honour of a citizen whose contributions to the community have been particularly outstanding. It's been a great tradition for many years, and over the last four years Quinte has had some exemplary guardian angels.

In 2011, Peter Knudsen of K. Knudsen Construction was named the guardian angel for his work with a number of local community organizations, including Big Brothers Big Sisters of Hastings and Prince Edward Counties, the Hastings CAS, United Way of Quinte and, of course, the Quinte Children's Foundation.

In 2012, Bob and Sylvia Doyle were recognized as Quinte's guardian angels. The Doyles are tireless workers for the community, volunteering for the Belleville General Hospital Foundation and the Quinte Children's Foundation. Bob has served as the president of the Belleville and District Chamber of Commerce, while Sylvia has given up her time to raise scholarship money for the Canadian Federation of University Women.

This year's guardian angel was Wayne Dewe. Wayne, in addition to being the owner of Dewe's independent grocer on Dundas Street in Belleville, is one of Quinte's biggest hearts. Wayne volunteers generously for the Quinte YMCA, the Food for Learning Foundation, Quinte Health Care, Gleaner's Food Bank and Hospice Quinte.

These people who have served as guardian angels for the Quinte Children's Foundation since I became MPP for Prince Edward–Hastings truly represent some of the best people that our Belleville community has to offer. They are our volunteer backbone, keeping organizations in the Quinte region running smoothly.

Prior to being elected as MPP for Prince Edward–Hastings, I had the privilege to be the emcee at the Guardian Angel Galas, where we handed out the wings to people like Mark and Mary Hanley, Boyd Sullivan and Ross McDougall. All these great volunteers are a reminder of the spirit that makes International Volunteer Day so important. They're our guardian angels in every community right across Ontario.

Many of the functions of our community that keep our streets safe and make sure there's an MRI at Belleville General Hospital or summer camps for kids are run by volunteers like Bob and Sylvia, or Peter Knudsen, or Wayne Dewe. This is the season and tomorrow is the day when we recognize that we actually do have guardian angels among us, Mr. Speaker. Cheers to all of our volunteers.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's always a privilege to rise, today in particular on a bill that will hopefully address

some of the shortfalls that we see in our Employment Standards Act.

I want to thank the Minister of Labour for taking the initiative to bring this bill forward. I attended his press event this morning. I also was briefed by his staff just about half an hour ago, and I'm encouraged that we're going to have a discussion about some of these gaps that currently exist as it relates to employment standards in the province of Ontario.

1600

Although we're going to have that discussion, I do see the bill as making some small steps. It's based upon recommendations that have come out of the law commission's report of late this year. There are some things that are certainly missing out of that report that, hopefully, can find their way into the final construct of this bill.

It does several things. It addresses the issue of unpaid co-operative students and other unpaid trainees and brings them under the protection of the Occupational Health and Safety Act. I think we would find broad consensus in this House that any worker in the province of Ontario should be covered under the act and the basic premises of the right to know, the right to refuse and the right to participate. If you're going to be in a workplace, you should be protected, and I think that that is ultimately what that component of the bill will do.

The other aspect is that it removes the cap for employees to recover unpaid wages. Imagine working in the province of Ontario and not being paid for the work that you did. That moves the cap from \$10,000 to an unlimited amount and also extends that period from six months to two years to recover those funds. That's a measure of fairness and one that I think we can certainly support.

Changes to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, to change the rating and liability within temp agencies, and their clients: I'll be interested to see what stakeholders say about that at committee. But I think there's a liability there on both sides. When you're sending a worker into a place of work, we should ensure that all the bases are covered and that worker is protected completely.

There are two other aspects. The changes to the employment protections for foreign nationals: Obviously, we know that we've had an explosion in temporary foreign workers in this province and across the country, thanks to the federal government opening the doors to the Temporary Foreign Worker Program.

Speaker, they need to have the same protections as we all do in the province, but also, we have to look at some of the regulations under the industrial act that would protect—I think it's aimed at foreign migrant workers, what the minister is trying to do here. What we need to do is ensure that they have regulatory standards so that they're protected under the health and safety acts and industrial acts.

We saw just this week that three farm workers were injured just around Uxbridge. One lost his arm, and two were injured on the same day, so three in total. One lost

their leg and another was seriously injured, in a matter of hours. So there are certainly some gaps there under the industrial regulations that I hope the minister makes a priority at some point.

I look forward to debating this bill. I look forward to seeing it come up as a priority through the government, and it's not a moment too soon. As I indicated, it's small first steps but certainly can be improved upon, given our commitment to working people in the province of Ontario.

INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER DAY

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise to comment on the minister's statement on International Volunteer Day.

As he was speaking, I was reflecting on the great deal of good that volunteers do all around the world. That's why the United Nations has recognized this and celebrated it for nearly 30 years.

But I also remembered the old adage about thinking globally and acting locally. That drew my mind to all of the local volunteers, the unsung heroes of Beaches-East York, that we hardly ever have a chance to thank or to talk about or get people to know.

My mind went back to the last couple of weeks, to all the events that I've attended, almost all of them put on by volunteers, almost all of them staffed right up with local people who care passionately about where they live and about their community and about helping people. These groups included church groups, like Hope United, St. Luke's and St. John's Norway, that were collecting funds in order to do good work around Christmas. It involved the Beach Hebrew Institute on Kenilworth Avenue in the Beach, which is the only synagogue in my riding, which had a wonderful Hanukkah celebration and the lighting of the menorah on Saturday night. I was thinking about True Davidson Acres, where there was a fundraiser to help the seniors who live in that institution and to raise funds; and also, the Rotary Club, the Lions Club and Centre 55. All of them do such a marvellous job.

I'd like to thank them locally not only for what they do but also for giving a shining example to the whole world of what volunteers can really do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

PETITIONS

WORKPLACE INSURANCE

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the WSIB has mandated that effective January 1, 2013, all independent contractors and small business owners operating in the construction industry must have WSIB coverage;

"Whereas many of these business owners have their own private workplace insurance that in most cases is

more affordable, more efficient and provides more extensive coverage;

"Whereas mandatory WSIB premiums add significant costs to small businesses and adversely affects their growth prospects and in some cases their solvency;

"Whereas the government provided minimum notice about the change to businesses with WSIB sending out an official letter dated November 25, 2012;

"Whereas at a time when Ontario is facing a jobs crisis with" over "600,000 people unemployed, the government and its agencies should not be discouraging private sector job creation and growth by levying additional, unnecessary costs;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To direct the Minister of Labour to issue an order in council eliminating the requirement that mandates compulsory WSIB coverage on all independent contractors and small business owners in the construction industry."

I'll proudly sign this petition.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

Mr. John Vanthof: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a motion was introduced at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads 'that in the opinion of the House, the operation of off-road vehicles on highways under regulation 316/03 be changed to include side-by-side off-road vehicles, four-seat side-by-side vehicles, and two-up vehicles in order for them to be driven on highways under the same conditions as other off-road/all-terrain vehicles';

"Whereas this motion was passed on November 7, 2013, to amend the Highway Traffic Act 316/03;

"Whereas the economic benefits will have positive impacts on ATV clubs, ATV manufacturers, dealers and rental shops, and will boost revenues to communities promoting this outdoor activity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the Ministry of Transportation to implement this regulation" change "immediately."

I wholeheartedly agree, attach my signature and give it to page—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Ajax-Pickering.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Joe Dickson: To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on behalf of the residents of Ajax and Pickering:

"Whereas the regions of York and Durham are at the final stages of completing an EA"—environmental assessment—"for the YD-WPCP (York Durham water pollution control plant's) outfall; and

"Whereas the regions of York and Durham have chosen as the final solution an alternative which will not address the quantity of total phosphorus (TP) nor soluble

reactive phosphorus (SRP) being deposited into Lake Ontario; and

"Whereas Lake Ontario has been identified as the most stressed lake of the Great Lakes in the July/August 2013 issue of Canadian Geographic; and

"Whereas the town of Ajax and PACT POW (Pickering Ajax Citizens Together—Protecting our Water) have documented the excessive algae blooms on the Ajax waterfront with photos and complaints to the region of Durham; and

"Whereas SRP, and indirectly TP, contribute to the growth of algae in Lake Ontario;

"Therefore we undersign this petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and ask that the government of Ontario require the regions of York and Durham to implement an alternative that will reduce the amount of phosphorus (both TP and SRP) being deposited into Lake Ontario from the YD-WPCP," which is the York Durham water pollution control plant.

I will attach my signature to that, Madam Speaker, and I will pass it to Maya.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has indicated it will be making improvements to Highway 21 between Port Elgin and Southampton in 2014; and

"Whereas the ministry has not acknowledged the repeated requests from the community and others to undertake safety enhancements to the portion of the highway where it intersects with the Saugeen Rail Trail crossing; and

"Whereas this trail is a vital part of an interconnected active transportation route providing significant recreational and economic benefit to the town of Saugeen Shores, the county of Bruce and beyond;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario to require the MTO to include, as part of the design for the improvements to Highway 21 between Port Elgin and Southampton, measures that will enhance the safety for motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists and all others that use the Rail Trail crossing; and to consult and collaborate with the town of Saugeen Shores and other groups in determining cost-effective measures that will maintain the function of the highway while aligning with the active transportation needs of all interested parties who use the Saugeen Rail Trail."

I've received hundreds and hundreds of signatures. I agree with it, affix my signature and send it to the table with Jonathan.

1610

CELLULAR TRANSMISSION EQUIPMENT

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas cellular communications towers are proposed to be built in the vicinity of Bronte in Oakville;

"Whereas Industry Canada has ultimate authority to approve the location of cellular communications towers under the federal Radiocommunication Act;

"Whereas the province of Ontario has no jurisdiction in the placement of cell towers;

"Whereas the town of Oakville has very limited jurisdiction in the placement of cellular towers;

"Whereas many area residents and local elected officials have expressed concerns with the proposed location and its proximity to residential areas;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario request that the government of Canada grant municipalities the right to have enhanced participation in the placement of cellular communications towers in residential areas; and

"That the province of Ontario request that the government of Canada place a moratorium on the construction of cellular towers within 500 metres of residential homes until the implementation of an improved municipal approval process."

I agree with this wholeheartedly and will send it down with William.

CHARITABLE GAMING

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition from the riding of Durham that reads as follows—actually, it's from the riding of Prince Edward–Hastings as well:

"Whereas the government of Ontario, through the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, levies the Ontario provincial fee on the sale of break-open tickets by charitable and non-profit organizations in the province; and

"Whereas local hospital auxiliaries/associations across the province, who are members of the Hospital Auxiliaries Association of Ontario, use break-open tickets to raise funds to support local health care equipment needs in more than 100 communities across the province; and

"Whereas in September 2010, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario announced a series of changes to the Ontario provincial fee which included a reduction of the fee for certain organizations and the complete elimination of the fee for other organizations, depending on where the break-open tickets are sold; and

"Whereas the September 2010 changes to the Ontario provincial fee unfairly treat certain charitable and non-profit organizations (local hospital auxiliaries) by not providing for the complete elimination of the fee which would otherwise be used by these organizations to increase their support for local health care equipment needs and other community needs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to eliminate the Ontario provincial fee on break-open tickets for all charitable and non-profit organizations in Ontario and allow all organizations using this

fundraising tool to invest more funds in local community projects, including local health care equipment needs, for the benefit of Ontarians."

I'm pleased to sign and support this and present it to Arvind, one of the pages.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Toby Barrett: A petition titled "Scrap the job-killing trades tax," addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government's decision to create the Ontario College of Trades will impose yet another job-killing tax on hard-working occupations like hair-styling, heating, plumbing, air conditioning, car repair...; and

"Whereas the new trades tax results will increase costs for consumers of services; and

"Whereas the new Ontario College of Trades hinders job creation;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to abandon the misguided job-killing trades tax."

I agree with the sentiment and sign my name.

CELLULAR TRANSMISSION EQUIPMENT

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas cellular communications towers are proposed to be built in the vicinity of Bronte in Oakville;

"Whereas Industry Canada has ultimate authority to approve the location of cellular communications towers under the federal Radiocommunication Act;

"Whereas the province of Ontario has no jurisdiction in the placement of cell towers;

"Whereas the town of Oakville has very limited jurisdiction in the placement of cellular towers;

"Whereas many area residents and local elected officials have expressed concerns with the proposed location and its proximity to residential areas;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario request that the government of Canada grant municipalities the right to have enhanced participation in the placement of cellular communications towers in residential areas; and

"That the province of Ontario request that the government of Canada place a moratorium on the construction of cellular towers within 500 metres of residential homes until the implementation of an improved municipal approval process."

I agree with this obviously, will sign it and send it down with Matteya.

COAST GUARD AUXILIARY

Mr. Todd Smith: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Coast Guard Auxiliary units are oftentimes the first responders to any emergency situation that occurs on our waterways; and

"Whereas the use of green flashing lights by Coast Guard volunteers in their vehicles would help to cut down on their response time by alerting others on the roadways to their presence;

"Whereas these flashing green lights are currently prohibited from use in Coast Guard volunteers' vehicles under regulations in the Highway Traffic Act that restrict the use of flashing green lights to only the vehicles of volunteer firefighters and ministry-prescribed medical responders;

"Whereas the flashing green lights cost nothing to the government as they are bought and paid for by the volunteers themselves;

"Whereas, if the Coast Guard Auxiliary units were allowed the use of these flashing green lights in their vehicles, it would cut down the transportation time on the roadways, and this cut in time could very well mean the difference between life and death;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Coast Guard Auxiliary units either become prescribed medical responders, or a change to the act that adds ministry-prescribed first responders access to the use of the flashing green emergency light."

I'll send this to the table with Yong Da.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here that's been presented by people in my riding.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the purpose of Ontario's Environmental Protection Act (EPA) is to 'provide for the protection and conservation of the natural environment.' RSO 1990, c. E.19, s. 3.; and

"Whereas 'all landfills will eventually release leachate to the surrounding environment and therefore all landfills will have some impact on the water quality of the local ecosystem.'—Threats to Sources of Drinking Water and Aquatic Health in Canada;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That section 27 of the EPA should be reviewed and amended immediately to prohibit the establishment of new or expanded landfills at fractured bedrock sites and other hydrogeologically unsuitable locations within the province of Ontario."

Madam Speaker, I affix my signature, and thank you very much for allowing me the time to present it.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there are over 8,000 children and youth living under the care of the crown and of children's aid societies in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario Legislature hosted the 'Our Voice, Our Turn: Youth Leaving Care Hearings' in the fall of 2011; and

"Whereas these hearings made it clear that more must be done to support these young people and to raise awareness; and

"Whereas by proclaiming May 14 of each year as 'Children and Youth in Care Day,' the province would raise awareness and recognize the unique challenges faced by children and youth living in care; and

"Whereas Ontario's children's aid societies, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, and members of the community, including children and youth living in care, want to officially celebrate 'Children and Youth in Care Day' on May 14, 2014; and

"Whereas Bill 53, known as the 'Children and Youth in Care Day Act,' proposed by MPP Soo Wong, passed with unanimous support on May 9, 2013, but has since been delayed from being called for third reading;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario call Bill 53 for third reading immediately; and

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact Bill 53, the Children and Youth in Care Day Act, before May 2014."

I send this petition to you via page Spencer.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I have a petition here, yet another one, to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean Program was implemented only as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

"Whereas vehicle emissions have declined so significantly from 1998 to 2010 that they are no longer among the major domestic contributors of smog in Ontario; and

"Whereas from 1999 to 2010 the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and....

"Whereas the new Drive Clean test has caused the failure rate to double in less than two months as a result of technical problems with the new emissions testing method; and....

"Whereas this new emissions test has caused numerous false 'fails,' which have resulted in the overcharging of testing fees for Ontario drivers and car dealerships, thereby causing unwarranted economic hardship and stress;

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"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program."

I'll yet again proudly sign this petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY**ONTARIO PROVINCIAL POLICE
COLLECTIVE BARGAINING
AMENDMENT ACT, 2013****LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA NÉGOCIATION COLLECTIVE
RELATIVE À LA POLICE PROVINCIALE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 27, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 133, An Act to amend the Ontario Provincial Police Collective Bargaining Act, 2006 / Projet de loi 133, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la négociation collective relative à la Police provinciale de l'Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to rise in this House as the NDP critic for community safety and correctional services to offer some comments about Bill 133, the Ontario Provincial Police Collective Bargaining Amendment Act, on behalf of our caucus and our leader, Andrea Horwath. Today's debate is a bit of a milestone for me in my brief career to date as a member of the Legislative Assembly because it is my first time leading off debate on a piece of legislation for which I have responsibility.

The purpose of Bill 133, as its title suggests, is to amend the OPP Collective Bargaining Act in order to update the collective bargaining framework that governs labour relations between the province and the OPP. It essentially aligns the legislation specific to OPP collective bargaining with two other existing statutes: the Police Services Act, the legislation that provides the parameters under which municipal police services bargain; and the Crown Employees Collective Bargaining Act, the legislation that governs other Ontario public service, or OPS, bargaining agents.

It is a very brief bill, only three sections long. Its purpose is to remove management rights from the OPP Collective Bargaining Act by repealing the following section of the act. I'll read the section in full:

"Except in relation to matters governed by or under the Police Services Act, every collective agreement is deemed to provide that it is the exclusive function of the employer to manage, which function, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes the right to determine employment, appointment, complement, organization, work methods and procedures, kinds and location of equipment, discipline and termination of employment, assignment, classification, job evaluation system, merit system, training and development, appraisal and the principles and standards governing promotion, demotion, transfer, lay-off and reappointment, and that such matters will not be the subject of collective bargaining nor come within the jurisdiction of the negotiating committee or an arbitration board."

As it currently stands, the province, as the legal employer of OPP members, retains the right to administer all of these functions in light of any existing collective agreements. Repealing this section constrains the power of the employer in exercising these functions by allowing for a provisional management clause to be included in the collective agreement covering both uniformed and civilian staff.

In other words, Bill 133 recognizes that the management rights clause is no longer fixed. It is to be negotiated during the collective bargaining process as part of the give and take that goes into negotiating and ratifying the terms and conditions of work for OPP officers and civilian staff. The legislation will ensure that these particular rights are to be exercised reasonably and in accordance with the collective agreement. And if they are not, these rights can be subject to an arbitration board.

More importantly, Bill 133 is significant because it brings the labour rights of OPP members into alignment with the rights of those who work for municipal police services and with other OPS employees. No other municipal police force in the province has collective bargaining legislation that includes management rights, nor are management rights included in the statutes that govern the bargaining framework for OPSEU, AMAPCEO—the Association of Management, Administrative and Professional Crown Employees of Ontario—or PEGO, Professional Engineers Government of Ontario.

The amendment proposed in Bill 133 will ensure greater consistency between the Ontario Provincial Police Association, OPPA, collective bargaining agreement and the collective agreements negotiated by other municipal police services and by other OPS bargaining units.

Those affected by this legislation are the approximately 6,000 uniformed and 3,000 civilian members of the Ontario Provincial Police who are currently represented by the OPPA. These 9,000 women and men are responsible for ensuring that Ontario's cities, communities, neighbourhoods and waterways are protected. They work tirelessly to maintain public safety over almost a million square kilometres of land and more than 100,000 square kilometres of waterways, dedicating and often risking their lives to protect the citizens of this province.

Just as these officers and civilian staff work diligently to protect the communities in which we live, the OPPA works hard to ensure that its members are protected while on the job. The OPPA is the sole bargaining agent for these members, and exists to represent their interests during government negotiations. It promotes healthy and safe working environments, advocates for improved health and safety standards, and supports members who experience job-related stress or injury.

By working with the OPPA to protect the labour rights of OPP members, we, in turn, maximize the protection and security of our neighbourhoods and communities. That is exactly what Bill 133 is intended to do. But it has taken some time to get here today, to finally have this debate and move forward with this amendment.

In my briefing with ministry officials on the bill—and I want to thank the minister for arranging the briefing before the legislation was introduced—I learned that the issue was identified by the OPPA as early as 2009 and that wide-ranging consultations took place in 2010 as part of the consultations on public sector compensation restraints.

Given the length of time that the OPPA has been advocating for this amendment, my colleagues and I in the NDP caucus are pleased that this issue is finally being addressed. Modernization of the OPP collective bargaining act is something that New Democrats have called for repeatedly. We welcome the opportunity to participate in this debate and look forward to seeing the bill move quickly through the legislative process and passed expeditiously.

Of course, members of this House will be aware that this bill reintroduces a change that that was first proposed last spring as part of a massive omnibus budget bill that also included controversial changes to the OPP Collective Bargaining Act interest arbitration system. Members of my party strongly supported the change to the OPP management rights provisions contained in the budget bill and also recognized the need to reform the time-consuming, costly and cumbersome interest arbitration system.

However, we could not support the direction the government wanted to take on interest arbitration. As a result of some political game-playing and manoeuvring during committee deliberations on the budget bill last spring, all the changes were voted down—mistakenly, as the minister admitted in her speech last week—and this important collective bargaining act amendment did not move forward. To avoid a repeat of what happened last spring, Bill 133 deals only with a single item, the issue of management rights, which should help to move it quickly through the legislative process.

But here I want to point out that just because Bill 133 only deals with management rights does not mean there are no other issues related to OPP collective bargaining that also deserve future attention. Once this bill has passed, I urge the minister to widen her scope and ensure that other issues that have been flagged by the OPPA are brought forward for legislative consideration.

In particular, the current system of interest arbitration is an example of an issue that must be addressed, but not in the way the Liberals proposed to deal with it through section 52 of the spring budget bill. The interest arbitration system is part of a carefully constructed system of industrial labour relations dispute resolution that has served Ontario well for generations.

Nevertheless, New Democrats recognize that the system as it presently operates is time-consuming, costly and cumbersome, and agree that it needs to be modernized.

1630

Under the OPP Collective Bargaining Act, rights arbitrators do not have the powers to order disclosure, issue summons or even determine his or her own proced-

ure, powers that are available to other arbitrators appointed under the Ontario Labour Relations Act. Because of this, rights arbitrators operate in what is essentially a procedural vacuum.

However, we are concerned about proposals that would open up the interest arbitration process to endless litigation in the courts. Instead, we have been advocating for changes that will enable the system to do what it is supposed to do: enable fair, balanced and workable arbitration decisions.

Another issue that will require attention in the future, following the passage of Bill 133, is the omission of the OPP Commissioned Officers' Association, the COA, from the OPP Collective Bargaining Act. The COA represents about 175 officers who are inspectors, superintendents and chief superintendents. It is mandated to support its members, to advocate on their behalf around conditions of employment and to negotiate with the province within established frameworks. Some of the many issues the COA deals with relate to pensions, benefits and working conditions.

COA officers are not covered under the OPP collective agreement, and their association is not recognized in the OPP Collective Bargaining Act. Until a few days before the introduction of Bill 133, the COA believed that they would be included in the legislation. With the introduction of the bill, they learned that this was not to be the case. After Bill 133 has passed, I urge the minister to begin consultation with the COA to determine the fastest avenue to offer their members the same rights. These members hold the most senior ranks within the OPP and have dedicated their lives to serving our communities. They should be provided with the same labour rights available to others in the OPP, available to other municipal police services and to other OPS employees.

I want to emphasize that New Democrats support this bill because of our strong commitment to collective bargaining as fundamental to protecting the rights of both employers and workers. Collective bargaining provides a structure to resolve issues at the negotiating table rather than exhausting time and energy addressing complaints workplace by workplace. It demonstrates respect between employer and employee, promotes a sense of job security, reduces management costs related to labour turnover and creates a channel of communication between management and workers to empower both parties by setting out clear decision-making processes.

Given how far we have come as a society in recognizing the benefits of positive labour relations and the importance of a strong legal framework to facilitate collective bargaining, it would be nice to think that all parties on both sides of this House shared the same commitment. Sadly, that is not the case. We know that Tim Hudak and the PCs want to gut labour relations in this province. They dream of a province where workers shuffle from one precarious, low-wage job to another, competing with each other in a race to the bottom just as we have seen in so many US states.

Tim Hudak and the PCs see the middle class as the enemy of Ontario's economic strength. They constantly

attack unionized workers for their efforts to secure financial security for their families. But it is the contribution of the labour movement in ensuring the collective well-being of Ontario families, in fighting for stronger protections for worker health and safety that has brought this province to the levels of prosperity that we enjoy today.

In his white paper Flexible Labour Markets, the leader of the official opposition proposes to—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I remind the member that it is the bill that she is to be speaking to, not other material.

Interjections.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I look at my own community of London, Ontario, and the devastating impact of the pullout of electromotive diesel. When Caterpillar workers at that plant rejected a 50% wage cut—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Just a moment. A point of order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: What has the pullout of Caterpillar got to do with this bill?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): In the middle of a sentence, I am unable to make that determination, so I'd remind the member to make her remarks relevant to the bill at hand.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Okay. The legislation is speaking to collective bargaining and the importance of unionized collective bargaining processes, and so that's what my speech is addressing.

As we have seen in the US with the right-to-work agenda, there is a steady erosion of wages, not just among union members but among all workers.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Just sit down. I've asked the member to restrict her remarks to the bill being debated.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Bill 133 is about collective bargaining, and I am speaking to the importance of collective bargaining in maintaining the prosperity of this province. In particular, I wanted to—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order: This bill is about removal of management rights from a collective agreement; that's what this bill is about. We can all look at the bill.

Speaker, I would expect you to enforce the rules.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I've asked the member to restrict her comments.

Please continue.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Okay. And what about the Liberals' record in support of collective bargaining? If any of you were here for my inaugural speech, you will have heard me say that it was in fact the Liberals' decision to bring in Bill 115 that was the tipping point in my decision to run for elected office. It was what brought me to this House today.

As we know, Bill 115 removed the democratic right of education sector unions and school boards to bargain collectively. Not only did it undermine democracy in this province, but it violated—

Hon. Michael Coteau: Point of order, Madam Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Excuse me. Point of order.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Madam Speaker, I think the speaker should stick to the issue at hand. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I would remind the member and ask her to keep her remarks consistent with the bill being debated.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Okay. While I am pleased to hear the support that was expressed by the PCs for Bill 133 and certainly the actions by the government in bringing the legislation forward, we have to recognize that ultimately actions speak louder than words. One only has to look at each party's record to see clearly where each party stands on support for the fundamental principles of collective bargaining.

In closing, I would like to reiterate our party's support for the amendment proposed in Bill 133. Removing management rights from legislation and recognizing management rights as items to be bargained collectively brings the OPPA into line with their municipal counterparts in other police services and with other provincial employees.

I want to thank the OPPA for working so long and so hard to address this issue, for pointing out the lack of consistency across the OPS in the treatment of management rights. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the important work done by OPPA President Jim Christie, for his time and effort advocating on behalf of his members. I would also like to commend him and the association for remaining patient throughout the often lengthy and sometimes confusing legislative process.

We know that stable, effective and sustainable policing will only be accomplished through positive and respectful labour relations between the OPPA and the government. I'm pleased to speak on behalf of the New Democratic Party and to express the full support of our party for this bill coming forward and for its speedy passage. In fact, I will be the only NDP speaker to this legislation, to help move it quickly through committee and to third reading.

Thank you for your time, and I thank all members of this House who have expressed support for this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions? The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I wanted to thank the member from London West for her support of Bill 133. We want this bill to pass as soon as possible, because the Police Services Act needs to be—the work that the OPP does—if this amendment to the act is passed, it will establish more consistency between the act and the two pieces of legislation, the Police Services Act and the crown employees act.

1640

This amendment should have passed long ago, but because of an error when this legislation was introduced

as part of the budget in 2012, this amendment was removed by mistake. So I ask all of my colleagues to support this bill and make sure that it passes as soon as possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure to rise here today to support this bill for the OPPA with respect to removing management rights from collective bargaining, to extend that as what's available to every other policing organization across the province.

I would be remiss not to stand here today and congratulate my current seatmate, who is the former critic for the area, as well as our current critic, the member from Leeds–Grenville, and as well Garfield Dunlop, who have worked diligently on this over the years.

I just wanted to put on this record my great admiration and respect for Ontario's police officers. I have a great deal of experience with the policing community. When my father was alive, he spent a great deal of time as the president of the Canadian Association of Police Boards, so policing was something that we talked about a lot while I was growing up, and I have a lot of admiration and respect for that community. I wanted to make that publicly known.

My father's name was Danny MacLeod, and he passed away in August 2007. When he passed, the police in his small-town police force in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia—there were 26 of his officers, and they gave him a proper honour guard, because at the time that he passed, he was the police commissioner.

He would remark to me—because, of course, I grew up in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia—that he quite enjoyed sitting on a board which he chaired as part of the Canadian Association of Police Boards with the chair of the Toronto Police Commission, and he would often say how funny it would be that they would have thousands of police officers and he had 26. He would like to take those great ideas that he would get from people like Norm Gardner, Julian Fantino and all of those other people.

I do want to put that on the record. I want to thank you very much for your time.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I would like to start off by commending the member for London West for a very thorough review of the legislation. I would actually just like to say that the bill is called Bill 133, the Ontario Provincial Police Collective Bargaining Amendment Act.

The member, in her first one-hour lead, talked about collective bargaining, because it's part of the act. This act—let me read it in its entirety.

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Done. I'm done. It is three points. It's a very logistical process bill. It has been a long time coming. It deserves full attention, but it doesn't deserve three or four days of debate.

In fact, the OPPA president, Jim Christie, said—of course, the bill has their support—that it's been stripped

down to the bare essentials, as pointed out, in order to reduce the PCs' ability to stall the passage. Because this is what the PC Party is now being known for: stalling legislation in this House.

Of course, the member has already pointed out that this is a fundamental piece of collective bargaining. This amendment has been a long time coming. It does not deserve three or four days of debate. We will see how many speakers the PC Party puts up to it, or how long they stall this piece of legislation, as that is your reputation: one, saying no to budgets; two, even before you read them; three, getting nothing done; four, standing in this House and not—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Okay. I think you need to—all right.

Further comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: I just want to commend the member from London West for her usual very thoughtful and very incisive presentation. She really does her homework, and I appreciate the good work she's doing in this House, even though she's a member of the other party.

I also want to commend the member from Kitchener for her insightful comments.

This is about collective bargaining rights for the Ontario Provincial Police. I know that the members of the PC Party always like to put down government workers, but these are some of our best government workers, the Ontario Provincial Police, and they deserve collective bargaining rights. They don't deserve to be looked down upon because they are government workers. It's sad to see that the PC Party is always putting down government workers like our policemen and policewomen. This is not acceptable, because our OPP risk their lives 24 hours a day—9,000 of them across this province. The work that they do in small towns and middle-size towns—they're on the roads or highways, risking their lives in the weather conditions to keep our roads safe. We've had some exemplary policing out of these men and women, who, as I said, are out there for the good of the province, the safety of all our citizens. That's why bills like this, which protect their collective rights, are important.

So I don't know why the PC Party keeps stalling this and refuses to support these rights for Ontario Provincial Police—which is a technicality, and it should be done with. Let's get this approved so we can help rectify this wrong. I am just really upset by the PCs—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The time has expired.

The member from London West has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to thank the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, the member from Nepean–Carleton, the member from Kitchener–Waterloo and the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for their comments on my speech.

I wanted to say at the start that, as soon as the PCs hear the term “management rights,” they get all excited. They talked about the fact that it was being removed from collective bargaining. In fact, management rights

are being removed from legislation so that they can become subject to collective bargaining because the collective bargaining process is the forum in which these kinds of issues should be discussed.

I also wanted to thank the member for Kitchener–Waterloo. I think that her speech to my presentation really exemplifies the support that our party has always demonstrated for collective bargaining, in particular when I think about Bill 115 and the effort to strip collective bargaining rights from education sector unions and from school boards and how that legislation contributed to the election of the member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

The member from Eglinton–Lawrence pointed out the important role of public sector workers. Absolutely, that is what underlies this legislation. That is why it's important to see this legislation pass quickly through: because we do recognize the contribution that OPP officers make to keeping our communities safe. But if the Liberals had recognized the important role of teachers and other public sector workers when they were thinking about introducing Bill 115, it might have made them think twice.

I'm glad that the Liberals have brought this legislation forward, and I would urge the PCs to work to make sure that it passes—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further debate.

1650

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm very pleased to have been asked to participate in the debate this afternoon and speak to this bill.

This is an important bill, one that we will be supporting because, of course, we highly value our police officers here in the province of Ontario. They do great work, and we're pleased to stand with them and support them. They are valuable members of our community and valuable public servants. I have a couple of police officers in my family, here in the city of Toronto, and a couple of my friends from high school have become OPP officers. I think all members in this House support our police officers. They are valued public servants.

Bill 133, An Act to amend the Ontario Provincial Police Collective Bargaining Act, repeals a portion of the OPP Collective Bargaining Amendment Act. This section states that collective agreements allow specific issues of employment to be the exclusive function of the employer to determine and are not subject to collective bargaining. This is something that the members of the association have been asking for, for a long time. I'd like to point out that this government has been in office for 10 years now—

Interjection: A decade.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: —a decade in power, and of course they're slow, I guess, in catching up on quite a few files. Again, this is something that members of the association have been asking for, for a long time.

I know that our opposition critic, our good friend in the PC caucus, Steve Clark, has worked closely with the

Ontario Provincial Police Association. I know that another colleague of mine, MPP John Yakabuski, from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, who is also going to be speaking to this important bill this afternoon, has also done a large amount of work with the OPPA, of course along with another member of our caucus and good friend of the OPPA, MPP Garfield Dunlop, from Simcoe North. These three MPPs, whom I'm proud to call colleagues and friends, have done great work on this file and really understand the ins and outs of this particular piece of legislation, and I thank them for their advice and ideas. I think they really bring a lot to the debate here at Queen's Park, and their input on this bill is quite valuable.

The amendments proposed within this bill remove management rights from the legislation, keeping consistent with language in the Police Services Act that deals with municipal police employees in Ontario. This would also make the act consistent with the Crown Employees Collective Bargaining Act. Nine thousand members of the Ontario Provincial Police would be affected by the commitment that was made by this government to the Ontario Provincial Police Association.

I'd like to talk a bit about the OPPA history in the province of Ontario:

"The Ontario Provincial Police Association ... came into existence March 3, 1954. Its purpose was to represent the interests of those police officers having non-commissioned rank within the Ontario Provincial Police. As explained by former OPP Association President Edward J. Wild in a book commemorating the OPP Association's silver anniversary, 'Like all employee organizations, our roots began in the minds of a few members, and our growth and prosperity are a direct result of the foresight of those individuals.'

"When Wild spoke of growth, he was describing not only the first 25 years but the next 25 years as well. In 1954, the OPP had a total strength of 1,000 men. Just over half of those (540) became members of the OPP Association. Each made an average wage of \$3,000 per year. On January 3, 2002, the OPP Association assumed the role of representation of the civilian members employed by the Ontario Provincial Police.

"Today, the membership is made up of 6,106 police officers and 2,985 civilians employed by the Ontario Provincial Police, as well as 3,663 retirees and 898 surviving family members.

"On a daily basis, a plethora of issues arise from the 12,000-plus OPP Association members concerning such things as claims, salaries, benefits, pensions, legal issues and other labour relations issues. Each issue can be complex and overwhelming, however the association employs nine administrative assistants and six executive staff members who regularly deal with these wide-ranging topics on a daily basis.

"There are seven members of the current association's board of directors, with the president being voted in by a provincial election. The other six members are voted in using the delegate system. The board of directors are employees of the Ontario Provincial Police however are

seconded to their association duties for three-year elected terms.

"Over the years, although many changes have taken place within the association, the primary objective remains constant: the betterment of working conditions, along with salary and benefits, for its members.

"A unique and co-operative relationship is maintained between the OPP and the OPP Association. The OPP Association believes that removing normal adversarial positions from the negotiating process sets the groundwork for many achievements reached today and into the future. This includes better wages, improved working conditions, and advanced health and safety programs, along with elevating the standards and upholding the honour of the OPP. Educational and transitional programs have been introduced to train and develop members relating to benefits, grievances, life skills, presentation and communications.

"Many of our members have become proficient in these skills as a result of OPP Association-developed programs such as the Police Association Certified Executive Program (PACE), Helpful Information Needed to Succeed (HINTS) and Franklin Covey's 7 Helpful Habits for Law Enforcement.

"The OPP Association strives to provide a level of service to their members that is exceptional and the best in the country. This accomplishment has not been gained without the assistance of the membership who, when asked, never fail to supply direct input in issues that are taken to numerous provincial committees and boards. The OPP Association has representation at pension, life insurance, bursary, benefits, conduct, legislation, clothing and equipment, transport, telecommunication and safety committees. Through recent lobbying efforts, the association has been actively involved in new provincial legislation called 'the move over law' and continue to lobby municipal, provincial and federal governments with issues that affect their members."

I think that's a good rundown of the association and what they do for their members. Of course, "It's never acceptable for any organization to rest on past achievement." That's what President Wild is recorded as saying, "and true even today, the OPP Association continually adapts and meets new challenges to better its membership services."

But getting back to the bill, currently among the employer rights contained in subsection (3) of the act are work methods and procedures, job classification and evaluation, training and deployment, transfers, layoffs and reappointments, discipline and termination.

Our PC caucus does not oppose what would be considered a housekeeping measure with this bill to give OPP employees access to the same collective bargaining rights as their counterparts in municipal policing.

Speaker, we want to keep our communities safe and healthy. However, this must be balanced against the fiscal pressures we are currently facing and must be done in a cost-effective method. Additionally, this is a very small bill with only a couple of sections. As it is dealing only with the OPPA and the contract negotiations, this

has fuelled a lot of discussion in our communities about the OPP billing process. Both on a provincial and municipal level, policing is an issue that every community has been talking about for a while. I've seen how this has become an issue in my riding and near my riding with the ongoing issues around the London police and their contract, and I thought the member from London West was going to talk about this in her remarks—a big issue in the city of London and I think one that has spread beyond the borders of London, right across the province.

The budget increases are becoming unsustainable in these economic times, and the spending has only been for personnel and keeping service at the currently existing levels. We know that the OPP set the policing costs for the rest of the province, and the focus needs to be on what we are able to pay.

1700

Of course we love our police officers. I said in the beginning that all members on both sides of this House respect the tremendous work that they do. But we are also hearing that people are really finding it hard to make ends meet. Our cities simply cannot afford these increases that are driven by contract arbitration awards, and, of course, once the police receive an award, then next comes fire, then EMS, and all the way down the line. A simple increase for police dominoes into large increases all across the spectrum, and then, of course, we have pension increases. All that is to say that we need to be aware of the costs being forced onto Ontario taxpayers. Be it municipal, provincial or federal, we all know there's only one taxpayer and only one ratepayer.

However, one of the biggest issues that Ontario residents want to see this government address is to act in fixing the province's arbitration system. Our caucus introduced a bill last spring, one that was supported by organizations like the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and, across the province, by dozens of mayors and municipal leaders. However, the bill was defeated when the government and the third party joined together and have instead done nothing to help in resolving the problem of escalating emergency services wages that are quickly becoming an unmanageable burden to both municipalities and their respective taxpayers.

One recent article that was in the London Free Press, I guess to highlight the issues that are happening—I know the member from London West and, of course, the health minister from London North Centre and also the NDP member from London—Fanshawe have to be aware of this. I'm surprised that they are not actually pushing this forward in the Legislature. But, Speaker, the article starts out by saying, "Two London politicians from opposite camps are shooting down a police request for a 3.3% budget hike, vowing to push for an all-out freeze when the police budget comes to city council.

"Police Chief Brad Duncan, in turn, is sending a shot across council's bow—charging it's 'irresponsible' to call for a pre-emptive freeze before the politicians see the"—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd just remind the member to keep his remarks to the bill being debated.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you, Speaker.

So, of course, we're speaking to Bill 133, which is An Act to amend the Ontario Provincial Police Collective Bargaining Act, repealing a portion of the OPP collective bargaining agreement act.

Speaker, just a couple of paragraphs: The police chief in London, Brad Duncan, "is sending a shot across council's bow—charging it's 'irresponsible' to call for a pre-emptive"—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Point of order.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I don't believe the member—you just warned the member, and he just went right back to his points, which is not relating to the bill, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I remind the—

Interjections.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Speaker, I believe I am speaking to police bargaining and collective bargaining in the province of Ontario. I guess the issue I have is, where the heck are the London MPPs? Why are they not speaking to this issue? And when we're debating Bill 133, An Act to amend the Ontario Provincial Police Collective Bargaining Act, repealing a portion of the OPP collective bargaining agreement act, I don't understand why the health minister or the two NDP MPPs from London West and London—Fanshawe are not raising this issue. It is the topic in London today, because people can't afford to pay more taxes. Of course it's the problem we have here in Ontario when we have a government that hires 300,000 more government union workers—

Interjection.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Sorry—300,000 government workers and we've lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs. It's an issue like this in London that's driving jobs out of the province because people and companies cannot afford to pay the bills. And, of course, we know the Liberals and the NDP really are working together to bankrupt the province of Ontario. It's a real shame for the people who are stuck paying the bills.

I mean, we talk about the middle class being gutted. The middle class is being gutted in the province of Ontario today. In fact, wage growth in the province of Ontario is dead last—right now as we speak—all across Canada; it's dead last in the province of Ontario. I think that is something that is scary.

But, as I said, back to Bill 133, just to repeat that our caucus introduced a bill last spring; it was supported by organizations like AMO. The Liberals and NDP joined together and defeated it.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It's shameful.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It really is shameful.

As with every other piece of legislation we have seen this government put forward, Bill 133 fails to tackle some of the major issues affecting everyday Ontario residents: creating jobs and, I guess, restoring hope to people in the province of Ontario and getting the books balanced in Ontario.

So, Speaker, I actually just want to put it into the record that I brought up the London police issue today, and I guess it was shut down by the NDP member from Kitchener. It's an important issue that needed to be brought forward. I know the people of London will be happy to hear that.

With a few minutes left here, I think a good thing to read into Hansard today is about the Festive RIDE program that's starting with the Ontario Provincial Police. The OPP "is taking the rare step of thanking Ontario drivers ahead of their 2013 Festive RIDE campaign"—which is Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere—"for not driving impaired over the holidays and for helping them get impaired drivers off our roads.

"The reason for the early thank you is because the OPP knows that the vast majority of drivers do understand that enforcement is only part of the solution and that driving sober is the single most important factor in ending the numerous impaired driving related deaths that occur on Ontario roads every year. The OPP considers these drivers to be among their most dedicated road safety partners because they share the responsibility of saving lives on our roads through responsible driving behaviour.

"The campaign runs from November 23 to January 2, 2014. According to the OPP, the public can expect to see as many OPP Festive RIDE stops as ever during this year's campaign, in order to deal with the relatively small number of drivers who choose to get an impaired driving charge over the simpler and less costly solution of not getting behind the wheel after consuming alcohol. Unfortunately, the irresponsible behaviour of one driver can negatively affect the lives of many.

"I am calling on all road users to help us keep everyone safe over the holidays. Never allow yourself to drink and drive, never allow someone you suspect is impaired by alcohol or drugs to drive and if you are out on the road and suspect that a driver is impaired, call 911. I would like to thank in advance the hundreds of thousands of drivers we know we can count on to take these simple but important measures to help us get everyone through the holiday safely," said Chief Superintendent Don Bell, commander, OPP highway safety division....

"The OPP is also reminding drivers that there is no safe amount of alcohol consumption when driving. This is evident every year in the number of warn range suspensions the OPP issues to drivers whose blood alcohol concentration"—

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Point of order.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's one thing to give a speech if you're running for city council to be rude and offensive to other people, but at least you could stick to the topic.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I ask the member to return to the bill.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order.

The member can wrap up the—

Mr. Monte McNaughton: The Minister of Infrastructure and the Minister of Transportation is interrupting me when I'm giving a public safety announcement about drinking and driving. I think with one paragraph left, he would have respected the message that was being delivered. That was from the Ontario Provincial Police.

Again, we support this bill. We're going to vote in favour of this bill, but it's important that we raise a number of these issues that I've tried to raise here today.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I wanted to thank the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex for his comments. I must say I am delighted to hear of the PCs' support for the collective bargaining process, and also the enormous respect that they have for the OPP, which, of course, all of us share.

1710

I did hear the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex refer to this bill as something of a housekeeping legislation, and I would respectfully suggest that perhaps the best way to deal with this expeditiously would be to limit the number of speakers that you put forward to the legislation. Perhaps you might have thought about this before you teamed up with the Liberals to bring in the EllisDon legislation, which was intended to tear up collective bargaining agreements for a single London company.

I also appreciate the concerns that you have raised about the interest arbitration process. Certainly the New Democratic Party has also raised concerns about the process. We have a different approach to how those issues need to be resolved, but certainly, we believe that the system does need to be reformed. It needs to be modernized. It needs to be brought into line with the 21st century to enable fair and workable arbitration decisions.

I think that on all sides of this House we share a common goal to get this legislation passed quickly, and I would urge members in the PC caucus to limit the number of speakers to the bill and move it forward as expeditiously as possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: What I've heard today is that all three parties agree that this is a bill that should move forward. We've heard, I think, good points as to why it should move forward, so why don't we do just that and move it forward. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to stand today and recognize the comments that were shared by my colleague from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. He raised some very important issues that we all should be mindful of and respectful of. It was unfortunate that he wasn't able to finish his speech without being interrupted there in the last 30 seconds or so, but in terms of some of those important issues, it's good to recognize that, albeit the government of the day was slow on catching up on some

things, this bill corrects some of their mismanagement from days gone by.

I think it's really important that I also recognize that the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex took time to recognize the depth of respect and support that this caucus offers our Ontario Provincial Police. The member recognized Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, Simcoe North and Leeds-Grenville as members who do so much for the organization, and if anyone has been in the House when Jim Christie or Chris Lewis have been here, they would know that I consider them personal friends.

My brother and nephew are both OPP officers, and the fact that the member, earlier in the day, suggested that we look down on the OPP, and that the member from Eglinton-Lawrence also implied that we look down on the OPP—I take great offence to that, and they should apologize and withdraw that from their record. We all have to respect the first responders who go to the line.

We just saw first-hand what happens when people so willingly give themselves to protect others, in Toronto this past week, with the unfortunate accident that happened to the Toronto police officer on Saturday. We can't do enough for the people who stand up for our safety in our communities, and no one in this House should suggest that the PC Party looks down on the people who give their lives to protect us.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I listened intently to the member's comments. It's interesting, though, because he touched on something around this bill and I just want to remind: this bill would make the labour rights of OPP officers more consistent with the rights of officers working for municipal police services, so it's a worthwhile bill. It's refreshing to hear that they'll be supporting this, because it is strengthening, to some degree, collective bargaining, which was interesting, because if the EllisDon bill that he had proposed and teamed up with the Liberals for had passed—which would have undermined collective bargaining rights and set a dangerous precedent across the province—it would have negatively affected the very officers that they pretend to support. So there are some very—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I ask the member to—you can't impugn motive. I'd ask you to withdraw.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Withdraw. So they are talking about collective bargaining and how important it is for the OPP officers. At the same time, they're working towards undermining collective bargaining rights with the EllisDon bill, when they tried to fast-track it through.

Also, the member spoke about the ballooning public sector salaries and how affordability is becoming an option for this province. Yet last Thursday, when our leader, Andrea Horwath, brought forward the cap on public sector CEO salaries and benefits, they chose not to support that. They had an opportunity to put some controls on CEO salaries, and yet they did not do that.

They voted with the Liberals to vote that important piece of proposed legislation down, which would have put controls on public sector spending.

So there are some inconsistencies happening right now in this House, but I'm glad to hear that all parties are going to be supporting Bill 133.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and glad to be able to respond for the final two minutes on this important bill.

Again, I guess to close this portion of my debate, I just want to send a heartfelt thanks to all the Ontario Provincial Police officers and all police officers in the province of Ontario for what they do. As I said, I have a sister-in-law and a brother-in-law who are both Toronto police officers, who work hard, and who tell me stories about how they put their lives at risk every day they go to work here in the city of Toronto. Of course, friends that I grew up with, that I played hockey with back in Glencoe, are now police officers in Middlesex county and in the city of London, and of course they do work hard. They put their lives on the line for us every single day they go to work.

Speaker, as I said, our caucus will be supporting this bill. I think having debate on all types of legislation is important, and I think it's something that all members in this House should respect. We were all elected democratically, and I think the truly democratic thing to do is to have debates on the bills.

Of course, the one thing I just want to come back to, in closing, is that I think the stats are pretty scary here in Ontario right now, and probably why the hole is just getting deeper and deeper more quickly. Of course, with the Liberal government supported by the NDP, we have lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs in the last 10 years. On the flip side, we have gained 300,000 more on the government union side and we've lost 100,000 private sector union jobs in the last 10 years under this government. So—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate.

Mr. John Yakubuski: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to join the debate this afternoon—and quite a debate it seems to be turning out to be. It seems that members of the government don't want to hear what members of the opposition have to say.

The bill, in itself, is not a large bill; in fact, it's the smallest bill in my time here in the Legislature in a little more than 10 years. It takes up less than one side of one page and that's in both French and English. In both French and English, it takes less than a page, so there's not a lot to the bill.

In fact, the member for London West did speak about—she started out speaking about what the bill accomplishes, which brings the members of the Ontario Provincial Police Association into an equal footing or a level field with members of police associations in municipal departments throughout the province.

Of course, the member for Eglinton–Lawrence went on a tirade about how members of the PC party disrespect police officers and public servants, and I find that just a little bit more than should be put up with in this chamber—when a member who's elected like the rest of us would make that kind of scurrilous accusation about another party.

1720

We all have our views on different subjects in this province, and we do have differences of opinion about how we're going to allow this province to survive fiscally over the long term. When one group of people believes that their route to power goes through the offices of the major labour unions in this province, as opposed to the people who populate this province, then we do have some problems with that. We're going to continue to articulate our feelings and our views and our support for the average John Doe in this province, who is finding it increasingly difficult under this regime.

The Ontario Provincial Police has been policing this province and is a respected, world-class organization, and has a tremendous reputation internationally. For the last 114 years—in fact, I think October 13 would have been the 114th anniversary. October 13, 1909, was when the OPP was formed, I believe.

Anybody who has been here for a while and anybody who's more than 30 or something—we all have a significant history, and I will talk a little bit about that. But I want to touch on one particular incident and how much it meant to people in my riding, when the then commissioner of the Ontario Provincial Police, Julian Fantino, came to the Chalk River area—I guess, north of Deep River—to the museum, for a special occasion commemorating the work that they do, but also as part of the 100th anniversary of the Ontario Provincial Police. I remember going there, and a number of people were there from that small community—it was astounding—because of the respect that they have for the work that police officers do. So when someone in this House impugns the motives of members of another party simply because they don't agree on some aspects of how we manage this province, I find that more than just a bit disconcerting.

When Julian Fantino was there, I was honoured, as the member of provincial Parliament representing Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, to even be part of that; that the commissioner of the OPP, representing about 10,000 uniformed and civilian people or more—I'm not sure exactly of the numbers—across this province, in that busy, busy year, in his extremely busy schedule, chose our community to be part of that celebration. It says something, maybe, about the history of policing in remote parts of Ontario as well.

I'm pleased that the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services is here for the debate today. I had the honour of joining her at the annual police memorial. When we look at those names on that marble wall, many of those were rural Ontario police officers, because you have to remember that once municipal

forces were formed—Toronto has its own police force, major municipalities have theirs. They're all police officers. But of the OPP, of course, a lot of them were policing in rural and remote communities. It was a moving day when we paid tribute to all of the fallen officers that Sunday morning. Of course, the parade that followed was absolutely spectacular—one of the best marching displays in a parade that I've witnessed here in my time at Queen's Park.

The Ontario Provincial Police Association—and I had the honour of representing our party as its critic from 2011, when the Parliament was sworn in and our leader, Tim Hudak, appointed critics, until just recently, maybe a couple of months ago, when some changes were made within our roles as critics. I'm certainly very proud of my replacement, the member from Leeds–Grenville, Steve Clark, and he's already doing a tremendous job.

But I had many conversations with Jim Christie and other members of the Ontario Provincial Police Association about this very issue. We have our differences when it comes to interest arbitration and stuff like that, and Jim understands that. He may not like it and he may not agree with what our stance is, but he certainly is respectful of it.

That's one thing I'll say about Jim as a representative of the OPPA. He's going to tell you when he disagrees with you, he's going to tell you when he agrees with you, he's going to tell you why he agrees and why he disagrees, but he's going to treat you in a very, very respectful way—which is more than we get from the other side of this House sometimes. Jim and I had many discussions about the differences that we have with respect to all of their issues, but this was one that we certainly agreed on, myself and Jim. I was supportive of this all along.

I think it would be fair to ask—this was an issue that, in a roundabout way but with other issues tied in, was thrust into the budget of 2012, and it got taken out of the budget. Now, it's 18 months later that the government finally comes up with this legislation. In the meantime, we've had all kinds of pieces of legislation that may have some importance to some groups and some special interest groups, and some of them have been legislation that has been important to people in all facets of life, all walks of life across the province of Ontario. But it took them 18 months to bring this bill, and now they want us to simply not talk about it, not to talk about other issues as well, and to just pass it through.

Well, it is the government's responsibility to deal with the legislative agenda. They could have dealt with this much, much sooner; in fact, they could have brought in stand-alone legislation, once the amendments that took this out of the budget of 2012 were passed. They could have brought it up with stand-alone legislation at that time.

I think we've made it clear—our critic has spoken—that we're going to support the bill. Our leader has spoken. Our critic has spoken to the bill, and we're going to support the bill. We're going to support the legislation,

because it's the right thing to do. Why should members of the OPPA be treated differently than members of all other police associations across the province of Ontario? So we're looking forward to its passage.

The other thing I want to get back to, in my time as critic as well—not just the time as critic but as a member of provincial Parliament, you have the opportunity to interact a whole lot more with members of the policing profession, both at the municipal level and the provincial level. I think it's a tremendous advantage and an honour to be able to do that, because you get to understand in a very small way—you know, there's the old saying that you need to walk a mile in somebody's shoes. I don't pretend to have walked a mile in their shoes, because I don't know everything about their lives, but I do know that it's a challenging job, it's a challenging life, and we have to be very, very supportive of those people who make the decision, who make the choice that they're going to be willing to put themselves in harm's way to protect the rest of us.

When you make that choice as a police officer, you also limit a lot of other parts of your life. A police officer's life is different. I can understand, and I've seen the interactions that I've had—and I respect and appreciate—the strength of the brotherhood that members of police associations have among themselves and their members.

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Sometimes it is, I'm sure, a lonely feeling, because they live a life in a fishbowl in a different way than I know politicians do in some ways as well. They do in a much different way, and it's not an easy life. It's not an easy life on families when you're a member of a police detachment or a police department. Shift work, families worrying about whether or not this is going to be a good day or a bad day or the worst of days: Those things are stressful, and they're difficult not only on the members of that police department, the uniformed officers and all of their support staff but also, of course, their families.

I've been at a number of retirement parties for police officers over the years, as I'm sure all members of this assembly have. That also gives you a glimpse into what life as a police officer is. I'm not aware of anybody who's sitting in the chamber today who has served as a police officer, and I'll stand corrected if I'm wrong. But if there is, that person could certainly give us a little glimpse as well. We do have members who have members of their families who are members of a police department.

My colleague Norm Miller, from Parry Sound–Muskoka, his wife, Christine—my God, what a courageous decision to become a member of the OPP not in her 20s, not in her 30s, but in her 40s; a courageous decision on the part of Christine, Norm and their entire family to be willing to make that career choice at that time of life. I know my colleague Steve Clark, from Leeds–Grenville, talks about his own family connection: His son is a police officer out in Alberta. Bob Runciman, whom I have the utmost respect for, the Honourable Senator Bob

Runciman, we used to talk a lot about his two children, who are police officers as well, and the respect and—what's the word?—how fulfilling it was to Bob as a member here that his two daughters were members of the OPP, serving their community, serving their province, serving the people and keeping our community safe.

We're blessed in the province of Ontario that we can take so much of that for granted. We can take so much of it for granted and assume that it just happens, that we live in one of the safest jurisdictions in all the world, Canada and Ontario, and that somehow, it's just matter of fact. The reality is, the way that our policing is conducted—the professionalism and the interaction between civilians and police in making it a congruent relationship where the best results are sought after—is all part of what has made our country, our province, our communities among the best in the world.

We have to take our hats off to those officers and all the officers of the past.

I'll go back a little bit. When we were growing up as kids, I think most young boys at the time—because I'm old enough to remember when police departments were a male-only bastion; you could not be a police officer if you were a female. For most boys that I knew, at a certain age, one of the heroes you would think of would be a police officer. Most boys thought, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" "I want to be a policeman." That was a career choice that so many of them thought about when they were children.

As they grow up, they start to reconsider, because they know of the sacrifices and the challenges to make that choice. But as young boys, they have this romantic view of it as being so special, and they have this heroic—they see them as being our heroes, so they want to emulate them when they grow older. That's perfectly understandable. And why do they do that, Madam Speaker? It is because we see the quality of the police officers that we are graced with here in Ontario, both at the municipal and the provincial levels. So there's good reason why our children, our grandchildren, will look at police officers and want to emulate their behaviour.

Yet today we find very many times when police officers feel like they are the target of the media. Every time there is a problem, it is massively disseminated throughout the media, and the public gets a very, very broad and pretty—

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, I'm not going to characterize that, because I don't have the ability to make that judgment as to whether it's accurate or not. But they get an awful lot of information about a problem within a police department or with one particular officer. We don't hear very much about the day-to-day work that goes on. I'm not saying that everybody's a saint. In every department, in every person—there are issues that could be negative at times. We hear an awful lot about the negatives, but we don't hear about the day-to-day work that continues to go on to ensure that we enjoy the freedoms that we have in this country, and we live in

such a safe country. We cannot forget the work that our first responders do in making and ensuring that we have that privilege.

We're not suggesting for a minute that if there are problems and there are things that have gone wrong, that the public shouldn't be aware of them. The public should always be made aware. But let's not forget about the tremendous work that is done as well and make sure that when the time comes, we're not forgetting that these are the people to whom we owe a debt of gratitude each and every day when they leave their homes and know—and know—that they are willing to put themselves into harm's way to protect us.

Bill 133: Absolutely, we're going to support this. It will repeal subsection (2), section 3, of the OPP collective bargaining agreement act, 2006. This section states that collective agreements allow specific issues of employment to be the exclusive function of the employer to determine and are not subject to collective bargaining. This bill will amend that. This will remove that section so that the Ontario Provincial Police Association will have the right to represent their members on these matters.

That is something that will bring them in line with police forces across the province, something that I think is the right thing to do, and I'm proud to stand here as a member of the Progressive Conservative caucus and support our leader, Tim Hudak, and our critic Steve Clark from Leeds–Grenville. We will be supporting this legislation. I'm very proud to do so.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I appreciated the comments that were made by the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. In particular, I appreciated what he had to say about our obligation as members of this assembly to carefully consider legislation and to debate it and to look at all of the different angles and aspects of any particular piece of legislation before we move it through the process.

I did note that there was one minute and six seconds left on the clock before the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke actually got to the legislation, actually started talking about the content of Bill 133. I think that demonstrates that the legislation is very specific. It's very direct. It's an important initiative, but it is something that we can deal with expeditiously in this House. It's something that the OPPA has been calling for for a number of years. It's something that we should be moving quickly through the process to address.

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I also wanted to thank the member for some of his comments about the impact of policing on family members, and the important contribution that all members of police services make to our communities, to maintain public safety, and to keep our neighbourhoods and our cities safe and healthy environments for all of us.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: It gives me great pleasure to speak after my friend from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. He is very entertaining and always has good stories about the police in his riding.

As the minister responsible for policing, I regularly receive comments from citizens who have been helped by a police officer, especially the OPP, and they are always very thankful for the work that they do. Of course, they never thought that one day they would need the services of the police—but when they do, they know that they are there to help, and they don't think about their own safety, but the safety of the citizens.

Last weekend, I received a nice note from a lady who was lost in the woods for two days. If it had not been for the OPP, she would probably have had a very sad ending, but they were there to help her. It was a very nice note that I received, that was forwarded to me by Commissioner Lewis. So I wanted to thank them again.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I always admire every time the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke stands up to speak, because typically all of his comments are based on real-life experiences and the relationships that he has. It's always good to hear his perspective on something that is very important. We can never, ever take our first responders—specifically the OPP, in this case—for granted. We stand by the men and women who put their lives on the line every day that they put their uniform on. The member is always very passionate in doing right by the people who put their best foot forward. He has touted a variety of reasons and issues that we need to be mindful of.

I'd be remiss if I didn't recognize that Bill 133 is actually in place right now and we're debating it because of quick, knee-jerk reactions and mismanagement by the Liberal government. Sometimes this government does things too fast, too hard, without thinking things through. Another example that pops to mind is the Green Energy Act, but we can talk about that on a different day.

In particular, Bill 133 is a bill that is coming forth to correct an oversight from their original legislation. It's about time that it happened, because, as I said, we have to respect our first responders. The OPP are very, very important. I grew up in a family where, whenever we had family holidays at my brother's, it wouldn't be uncommon for my sister-in-law to get a phone call to say, "Put another plate at the table," because he was bringing a rookie home.

We stand by our OPP, and I'm really proud to say that they stand by me. There have been instances in the last couple of years where I haven't been allowed on a stage—at the Walkerton OPP detachment opening, for example—and they were very apologetic about that. They stand by me, as we will them.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It was interesting to listen to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, because it

took an extreme amount of energy on his part—although he makes it look easy—to actually say anything about this bill. We got his life story. We got his past experiences at OPP events. He reiterated how much he values the OPP. I think that we can all say that we respect the OPP. That said, if you really respect the OPP, then you will not put up every single member of your caucus to speak for 20 minutes on a piece of legislation that you have supported from the very get-go.

Just to be clear, this has to do with collective bargaining. This bill would make the labour rights of OPP officers more consistent with the rights of officers working for municipal police services. These proposed changes would move the management rights clause out of the legislation and likely into collective agreements for uniformed and civilian staff.

When you look at this bill, you can't possibly put up every member of your caucus to deal with these six lines. We've read the bill in its entirety several times over. I'll do it right now. Done. So you cannot possibly—if you truly respect the legislative process, you will not stall a very simple piece of legislation that can go to committee. All of us have agreed on it; we have consensus. It hardly ever happens. Let's move forward and be respectful of our OPP services and also be respectful of the minority government and actually get something done today. We could do it today.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has two minutes to respond.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I was just showing off a picture of my granddaughter there, so I've got to put that back in there.

I want to thank the member for London West, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, the member for Huron–Bruce and the member for Kitchener–Waterloo for their comments.

I'll give a little more personal history, because there wasn't enough time in 20 minutes. I could speak also—the minister spoke about the lady who was lost. I can go back a few years to when my son was lost in Algonquin Park. I'll tell you, I had a good chat with Dan Hefkey, who was the head of the tactical unit—I can't think of the exact name of it at this moment—that headed up the search. My God, the work that they did in that case and I know they do in all cases was absolutely phenomenal—the way that they, in a very methodical way, plot out their plan and then follow it, which gives them the highest likelihood of success. There's nothing haphazard about how they do it. Boy, we were comforted—my wife and I were comforted—in knowing that that was the way they were going about it.

My colleague talked about RIDE programs earlier. This past week, on my way to Toronto, I got stopped in one of the new RIDE programs, one of the first of this season's RIDE programs. He asked me if I was drinking, and I said "Yes, I am." The McDonald's coffee was right beside me there—I need that sometimes to get here. So I want to also commend them for continuing to make our

roads safer during the festive season. The Christmas holiday time leads people sometimes to overindulge, and by having these RIDE programs, I think they protect all of us. So we continue to support them.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It's a great privilege, as always, to rise in this hallowed chamber to debate the democratic rights that the OPP and other law enforcement officers throughout the province defend on a daily basis. We have the greatest and utmost respect for those individuals who do that. In fact, we have already indicated that we will be supporting Bill 133. However, I feel that it is important to exercise the democratic right that these law enforcement men and women on a daily basis defend on the front lines.

With that in mind, in that spirit, I would also like to touch on what the fine member, my great colleague and party whip, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, alluded to, growing up as a young boy. Of course, I had two uncles who were Metro police officers here, and now they've retired. My one uncle was a part of the bargaining of the Metro agreements, the bargaining unit. So going back to collective bargaining and the whole process of that, we had numerous discussions on how that process went forward, negotiations and the ability to do so. But he has some concerns as well.

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My uncle Ross Milligan served with distinction for a number of years for the Metro police, as did my other uncle, Ralph Milligan. I want to thank them for their years of service and commitment to this fine city here in Toronto.

Growing up, I also admired the amount of civil duty that my two uncles and other family members have had in serving the great people of not just perhaps Toronto, but also the province of Ontario and indeed this fine country of Canada.

With that in mind, I wanted to become one of three things when I was a young boy. My mother's father was the captain at the fire hall here in the Beaches, and, of course, a firefighter was one of my loves and aspirations as a young boy, as was a police officer and a cowboy. Those were sort of the three highlights. But I—

Mr. John Yakabuski: There's still a lot of cowboy in you.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: There's a lot of cowboy still in this boy.

But growing up and in high school, I obviously changed the channel and wanted to become a teacher. I was having a conversation with one of my uncles, who said, "Now, Rob"—when I said to him, "You know, I'm thinking about maybe going through law enforcement and becoming a police officer," he said, "Rob, I'm going to be frank with you. You don't have the intelligence to go into law enforcement. You should probably try your hand at politics." So here I am, Madam Speaker.

But all that aside, there are good friends and neighbours of mine who are also in the OPP. Colin Foster, who

I grew up with, is a fine officer who I'm glad to call my friend—and very happy that if there were ever anything to happen in our community, I know that Colin would be the first to step up and do everything in his power to ensure the safety and well-being of our community. So I want to thank Colin Foster for his dedication as well.

Another good friend of mine I grew up with who is also sort of particularly interested in the collective bargaining process is Curtis Ducie, who is a police officer here and has been for a number of years. Curtis is actually—he and his partner have visited me here at Queen's Park. I gave them a bit of a tour and they greatly appreciated that. During our little tour, we did sort of touch on collective bargaining and the process of collective bargaining in that spirit. It's interesting that in those discussions, they realized that they're paid well and, as alluded to by the esteemed member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex earlier, the collective bargaining process is fine but the arbitration system is broken. When we hear from municipalities, when it comes to collective bargaining and going to arbitration—a lot of these unions opt to go to arbitration because they know that the arbitration system is broken. So there really is no real accountability for the collective bargaining process.

We respect the collective bargaining process, but when the system is broken—and our leader, Tim Hudak, has made this very clear: We need to fix that process if Ontario is going to lead again in jobs and the economy, unlike the policies that we're seeing here with the Liberal Party, which has ruined this province when it comes to the skyrocketing prices of energy and job losses here as of late.

It's remarkable to acknowledge the fact that the bargaining process, when it pertains to Bill 133—and, again, my fine friend Mr. Yakabuski pointed out that it has been 18 months that this piece of legislation has been in the hole, that this government has not brought this piece of legislation forward. If it truly was, as the NDP are saying, that we're trying to stall, then why was the NDP not trying to apply pressure to the Liberals to bring Bill 133 to the floor much sooner so that we could actually get this to committee and we could have a good debate on it? It's a democratic right that the OPP and other law enforcement officers, men and women on the front lines, bring forward.

It's just peculiar, it's odd to me, that the NDP and the Liberals have not collectively—because they do work collectively; I'm sure they've bargained something out—I'm not certain, but they haven't brought this piece of legislation forward previous to this. Now we're getting ready to rise for the Christmas season holidays, and they're just bringing this forward now. It's a little daunting sometimes when all these games are being played here at Queen's Park. I sometimes have to wonder what is actually going on when it comes to the games that the Liberals and the NDP play when it comes to bringing forward bills.

As well, I would like to point out that the Sergeant-at-Arms here within this hallowed chamber was also in

front-line law enforcement. He was a part of the elite RCMP, and I want to thank him for his years of dedication and service. I know that sometimes when he sits in this chamber and listens to us, he must wonder why he retired from the RCMP, and he might wish sometimes that he was back at his duties there. But I think it's very important, Madam Speaker, to acknowledge that.

I think it's very important to also remind people that the arbitration system in the province of Ontario is broken, and the municipalities are having a hard time under the collective bargaining agreements of other emergency and front-line workers. I was talking to the mayor from Cramahe township, Mr. Marc Coombs. He has grave concerns, as does the council, because of the collective bargaining agreements there and the arbitration system. They're very happy with the OPP and the ser-

vices they get. However, for a small municipality, the budget that has to go into law enforcement is quite daunting and burdensome for the taxpayers of Cramahe township, and there are other jurisdictions that I know are very close to perhaps economic collapse when it comes to the collective bargaining process, not just with Bill 133 or law enforcement in particular, but with this arbitration system that is broken.

With that, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I enjoyed my stay here in the last 10 minutes.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It being close to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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Holyday, Douglas C. (PC)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
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Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
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McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
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Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	

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Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
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Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
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Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
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Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
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Vacant	Niagara Falls	

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Second Session, 40th Parliament

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 5 December 2013

Jeudi 5 décembre 2013



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 5 December 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 5 décembre 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Let us pray.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, for those wonderful people in Lakefield, Ontario, who may be tuned in to the Legislature this morning, I will call second reading of Bill 141, government order G141, An Act to enact the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act.

INFRASTRUCTURE FOR JOBS AND PROSPERITY ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR L'INFRASTRUCTURE AU SERVICE DE L'EMPLOI ET DE LA PROSPÉRITÉ

Mr. Murray moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 141, An Act to enact the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, 2013 / Projet de loi 141, Loi édictant la Loi de 2013 sur l'infrastructure au service de l'emploi et de la prospérité.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Murray.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Every once in a while, there's a piece of legislation that comes along that is not well understood, and 10 or 15 or 20 years later, we look back on moments in Ontario's history and we realize that we've done something very significant. Many times those things that were done were controversial at the time.

I remember one of the things that, at the time, didn't get much note was when Bill Davis, in this House in 1967, introduced the act that introduced our college system. I remember the headline in the Toronto Star that year, when that was announced, was essentially something to the effect of we were creating universities for dumb people.

What has happened is our college system quietly got built through government, successfully, and I think all parties in this House contributed significantly to the expansion of it. I would say that it was one of the best economic policies in the history of Ontario. The college system gave us and continues to give us—which is why

this government nurtures that legacy and wants to pass on a healthier college system and is investing.

As Minister of Infrastructure, I'll talk a little bit about some of the investments in our college system. We continue to expand it, modernize it and, in partnerships with Bombardier, bring the classroom to the workplace, and we're looking at expanding the model.

I would say that the reason Ontario became the best production economy and the most successful production economy in the last half of the last century was disproportionately because of that single piece of legislation and the fact that when the university system could not produce a new generation of technology and vocational workers, we created the most skilled workforce in North America. We now have the most skilled workforce in the world—I know that our OSSTF teachers are here—and we have the best public education system in the English-speaking world.

But you cannot separate the economy from quality of life, the value of the people who are our great teachers, and the importance of the ambitions and imagination of our students.

I would like to think that the bill that we are introducing today is very much that consequential, because—well, the Premier has pointed out that we are driven by a number of things in our economic strategy and our job strategy, and that people and infrastructure are two important components of it. So today the government is advancing one of the foundations of its economic and job strategy, which is to really look at expanding the role of infrastructure in creating jobs and advancing our economy.

I do think that in 10 years, we will be looking at this bill as having been extraordinarily consequential to our ability to become, over the next 50 years, the most successful innovation economy in the western world in the same way that we were the most successful production economy.

So far, we have invested, as a government, about \$85 billion in infrastructure. That's in completely modernizing our hospital system. That's in building new colleges and universities; hundreds of new public schools; the largest expansion of our transit systems ever in Toronto and Ottawa; the introduction of rapid transit in communities that did not have it before, like Kitchener–Waterloo; and the expansion in Windsor of the largest parkway and soon the most important bridge crossing on the busiest trade corridor, which will develop and magnify our trade.

Mr. Speaker, our infrastructure is the foundation of our prosperity. Without this critical connectivity, without

clean water, without twinning our northern highways, which are actually our east-west trade route, none of our economic prosperity would be possible. So when we're asked, as a government, what our job strategy is and what our economic strategy is, when the opposition wanted, to use their words, to "clear the deck" so that bills could be brought forward that would dramatically increase jobs—this is one of those bills.

Is the government's job strategy successful? Well, we have about 600,000 people who are unemployed. Some of those folks are not employable in the terms that economists use, but my view is that everyone's employable. Right now, according to the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters association, we will create in Canada, within the next 24 months, 1.3 million jobs. That's not government numbers; that's private sector numbers.

In Ontario, at the current rate, in the portion in Ontario, which is one of the world's job creation leaders, that will create 800,000 jobs in Ontario that will either become available or be created between now and 2016.

Just think about that for a moment: 800,000 jobs being created in Ontario in the next two years, or jobs becoming available because people are retiring or there's capacity. That is more jobs than there are people unemployed in this province, and 2016 is not far away. So our job creation capacity of our economy is truly remarkable.

The challenge is, those are skilled jobs, and there is a mismatch. As my friend Benjamin Tal says, "We have people without jobs and jobs without people." So how do we use our education system, which this government has introduced much legislation on and advanced—but how do we use our infrastructure in two ways: to build the right kind of infrastructure for the 21st century economy so that we secure, expand and keep that rate of job creation, and how do we use our infrastructure spending to create opportunities for people to get the skills? Because right now, we are spending \$13 billion a year on infrastructure, each and every year.

Now, for 50 years, in today's dollars, Ontario never spent much more than \$3 billion or \$4 billion. As a matter of fact, we were spending at 20% or 25% of what we're spending today, so we have an infrastructure deficit to catch up on.

0910

This legislation will do a number of things. One, it will require us to have, and I want to emphasize, at least a 10-year plan, which means, quite frankly, that we would eventually like to get to a 20- and 25-year plan, which we do have. We have the Big Move, which is a 20-plus-year plan for rapid transit. We have a northern highways plan, which is quite aggressive. Now we're going to build our plans and put them into our budgets over those periods of time so there is a plan, a policy and a budget, so that it is actionable, measurable and transparent.

I don't think this is a partisan issue. My friends in opposition—I know I've had some very positive conversations with my friends in the third party. I think this is

something that unites us as progressive politicians wanting to see a higher level of public investment, and it being predictable, understandable and transparent.

This will actually require us to have a view that is evidence-based and public. Soon, through systems like iCorridor, all the data—my friend from Windsor—Tecumseh and my colleague from Ottawa—Vanier will be able to go online and look at how we're modelling a truck tunnel in Ottawa. How would that work? What would the ridership be? Should we have a toll on it for trucks? How should we finance it? That will all be transparent and will be built into future budgets.

My friend from Windsor—Tecumseh will be able to go on and see some of the challenges we've worked on together with the Windsor-Essex parkway, and how it's progressing. Is the remediation program working? How is girder replacement going? Are we on track? When are we opening new roads? What will the capacity be? What are the opportunities? What's happening with land values? How will this line up with the plaza and the new president's bridge that will give Windsor a phenomenal trade corridor? What would the ridership be? What is the mix of trucks? What are the economic opportunities? How does it integrate with land use and transportation planning? How is that parkway foundational, in very specific ways, to growing the Windsor economy? What kinds of logistics businesses? How do we mesh our land use and transportation policy?

We will actually look at: Should we build a highway extension or a subway or a GO line? We will be able to measure what the densities are, whether it will create the densities. We know that building a freeway is sometimes less expensive than building the same number of kilometres of subway, but we know that a subway moves many more people per kilometre much faster. So if you're measuring a subway compared to a freeway and you're measuring it based on how many people it will move at what cost per person at what speed, all of a sudden, sometimes the subway comes out with a much smarter result.

If you can actually measure that—as we know from the American experience in San Francisco and Milwaukee, freeways often diminish property values and reduce employment intensity, where subways and rapid transit systems increase employment intensity and land values in their surrounding areas and have an uplift in tax value. As a matter of fact, that's how the Embarcadero replacement and the Milwaukee freeway system were replaced, based on tax increment financing, another fiscal tool that this government gave to municipalities that allowed them to use the future value on their tax base created by a new infrastructure investment and borrow money against that future tax revenue to pay for it. iCorridor will actually allow us to have the data to actually allow large and small communities to use these new financial tools.

The other thing we're doing: \$13 billion creates a heck of a lot of jobs. So far, our infrastructure investments to date have created 600,000 jobs. Our next year, couple of years, spend will create over 100,000 new jobs. Remem-

ber, according to the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters association, we will have 800,000 skilled jobs. Ontario already has a job recovery that's the envy of the world. We're at about 170% job recovery from the recession, which means we have many more jobs created than we had even at our peak.

The UK's recovery is around 43%, and the UK decided to disinvest in infrastructure for a period of time and take a tax-cutting disinvestment strategy. It has resulted in the United Kingdom not having a job recovery, which is interesting, because the Conservative government did exactly what the official opposition is asking us to do: cut taxes, attack public sector pensions, and reduce the capacity and quality of government services. What happened in the UK is a pretty abject model of a complete economic failure: no job recovery and an economy that is a bit in the dumpster. We don't want to do that.

What the UK is doing now is investing \$24 billion in two subway lines alone in London. Why is the UK doing that—the British government, the Conservative government? Because they've now decided to do the exact opposite, which is to not reduce spending and to be focused most on strategic infrastructure critical to their economy for creating jobs and building the financial services sector. So the UK government has completely reversed itself and is now moving into some of its biggest spends, the biggest spend it's ever made in the British public transit system in London ever: \$24 billion is obviously a huge investment.

But we've got to do a better job than that, Mr. Speaker. We can't simply spend money; we can't simply spend money smarter. We can't simply integrate land use, transportation and economic policies. We've got to do more.

We've been working with the construction trade unions and with the construction industry to produce a jobs formula, because right now, if you're Ameresco or you're Bondfield or you're the operating engineers or the Steelworkers or the Carpenters' Union or LIUNA, or any number of those unions or those businesses, you're collaborating together right now, Mr. Speaker, and investing massively. I don't know if you've ever been to the operating engineers' or the ironworkers' or LIUNA's or the carpenters—you pick a union. They all have amazing training centres. And their completion rates—I know my friend from York South–Weston has been a huge champion of this and of the Hammer Heads program, which opens up these apprenticeship opportunities to young people; I want to thank her for being such an advocate, not just for infrastructure but also just for understanding how this transforms the lives of young people.

Those companies and those unions spend a heck of a lot of money training people to fill those skills for those 800,000 jobs we will be creating over the next 24 months. Right now, they are being created and right now, according to the private sector, they're being created.

But when they bid for our contracts, they're carrying that cost. And those companies that have unions that don't make these investments and those companies that

don't make these investments kind of get a free ride because they don't have all the additional costs of training that those companies, those entrepreneurs and union leaders do who make those investments. We're going to start recognizing that. As a matter of fact, we're going to look at how we maximize the apprenticeships, whether they're pipefitters or carpenters or engineering students or planning students.

For registered apprenticeships and for all the skilled and professional and design trades, we want to maximize the amount of jobs, because we are determined, as a government, that we cannot simply leave a new hospital in the community. We can't just leave a new parkway in Windsor. We can't just twin the highway in Kenora. Those projects have to leave hope behind. Those projects have to leave skills behind. Those projects have to leave jobs behind. They have to leave a generation of younger workers and they have to leave a generation of middle-aged workers who have lost their jobs and who are trying to get the skills to get back into the economy, or to grow an economy, to buy a house, to buy boots, to buy pants, to buy a car, to get a Metropass or a bus pass, to do all the things that rebuild our economy. We must leave skills, hopes and economic security behind when we do infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, this builds on the legacy of our college programs. It builds on the legacy of our apprenticeships, and our unions are delivering 70% completion rates, the best completion rates I know of. Our colleges are doing excellent work. Our businesses are doing excellent work. We are rebuilding Ontario road by road, brick by brick, job by job. No one else I can find has 170% job recovery. There is no other regional economy right now I can find in the world that is projecting, by its private sector, 800,000 skilled jobs. So how do we use our infrastructure spending, our college and university system and all the things that we are building to build those skilled jobs, to make sure the skills are there so those jobs are not unfilled? Because there would be nothing more embarrassing for us in Ontario than having the success of creating 800,000 jobs and then not being able to fill them. It means doing things differently.

0920

My colleague the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities has shown remarkable leadership with the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment, and the Premier and the Minister of Finance.

We have this remarkable partnership now with Bombardier at Downsview, where we're putting a subway. Why are we putting a subway there? Because our aerospace cluster is there. York University is there. We're going to put a subway there, but we're also putting a college in the workplace. They have to replace 5,000 workers. The average age of their workforce at Bombardier is 56—my age, Mr. Speaker. Maybe in this business—my friend Monte Kwinter inspires me; my friend Hazel McCallion inspires me—we have a little more longevity. But if you're an aerospace engineer, maybe you don't want to be an aerospace engineer at 94. We also have to

add 3,000 people to that workforce, because the Q400 aircraft and the new Bombardier aircraft are just taking off—literally taking off, the pun fully intended.

So integrating and using the infrastructure we build in our colleges, moving that into the workplace, putting our subway there, getting the private sector to retrain its workforce keeps those Bombardier jobs here. That is the kind of thing we know, economically, retains manufacturing jobs. Also, Bombardier is a beehive of activity because there are hundreds of small, specialized companies—in green fuels, in information, in on-board software systems—that supply that company.

As a matter of fact, the relationship between infrastructure and a high-growth economy is quite remarkable. What we know is that 5% of our businesses—just think about this, to understand how much the economy has changed: 5% of our businesses are generating 50% of our jobs. Just think about that: 5% of our businesses generating 50% of our jobs, 480,000 jobs. Some 240,000 of those jobs in the last couple of years have come from companies that are less than five years old, mostly being started by young people off platforms like the Digital Media Zone at Ryerson or VeloCity at the University of Waterloo, where students graduate not just with their degrees, but they graduate with their incorporation papers in their other hand, starting their company—because we now have financiers who make capital available to students in their undergraduate years, starting their companies. Xtreme Labs did not exist five years ago; my friend Sunil started it. The platforms they work on—they now have 1,200 employees in my constituency, 1,200 employees. Average age, 26; average income, \$80,000 a year. Five years ago, the company didn't exist. Sunil hasn't even had his 30th birthday yet. This is the new economy. These are the people—5%. They could be in Cochrane; they could be in Thunder Bay; they could be in Domtar. As my friend Thomas Friedman often writes in the New York Times, this is the new economy. You can plug and play anywhere. But it's challenging, because the manufacturing economy, while it is doing extraordinarily well, is not employing the people it used to. We can't quite get our head around that, about why the manufacturing economy is doing well but seems to be employing fewer people.

I want to tell you a very brief story, because I think there's a need for a higher level of economic literacy—and I'm directing this comment particularly at the official opposition, who I hope will respond to it. Because I'm confused by their economic policy—not confused in the sense that I don't know what I'm doing, but confused in that I don't understand the rationale behind it. In 1983 and 1984, in Pittsburgh, something terrible happened in 24 months. When we think of Pittsburgh, what do we think about?

Mr. John O'Toole: Steel.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Steel, right? We all think about Pittsburgh as steel, a city of 600,000 people. There were 104 steel mills in January 1983, 104 steel mills in Allegheny county. By December 1984, do you know how many steel mills there were in Pittsburgh?

Hon. Michael Chan: None.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Zero. My friend Michael Chan, the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Sport, heritage, Pan Am Games and a whole bunch of other exciting stuff, was right. But you know, what's interesting—I mean, just think about that: In less than two years, 104 of 104 steel mills closed. Because they couldn't get the iron ore? No. Because their energy prices were high, which they were? No. Essentially, the globalization of the economy made Pittsburgh a place where you could no longer make steel competitively. The emerging state capitalist countries—Brazil, China, Singapore—were all emerging with state-financed capitalism that really challenged the western European and North American economy.

So what's happening today? What's the steel industry like in Pittsburgh today, after it lost everything and for 15 years had no steel production? Would you believe that Pittsburgh today produces more steel than it ever has in its history? Just think about that: Pittsburgh today produces more steel than it ever has in its history. How many steel plants do you think there are in Pittsburgh today? Anyone want to take a guess? This is participatory debate, if you want to join in. There are two. Those two steel mills look more like boutique hotels. They don't have big, ugly smokestacks. They make more steel than the 104 steel mills used to make in the early 1980s. When those 104 steel mills closed, 143,000 people lost their jobs. So if you're an MPP from Windsor or from Hamilton or for an industrial community, or Sault Ste. Marie, go to Pittsburgh. If you're one of those politicians thinking that the road back to economic recovery and jobs can be done by manufacturing alone, go to Pittsburgh, because you know how many people are employed making more steel than Pittsburgh ever made in even the highest, dirtiest days of its steel industry? Do you know how many people make steel in Pittsburgh, Mr. Speaker? Anyone want to take a guess?

Mr. John O'Toole: Seventy-five?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: You're very close; it's 300. Is that important? Yes. Because steel is still the biggest source of GDP and economic growth for Pittsburgh. As Mayor Tom Murphy, who's a dear friend of mine and who just retired from politics down there—a good Democrat—said, “Steel is our most important export. It is incredible for our GDP. It is essential to my city, which is now only 300,000 people, but it is not a big job creator anymore. And the tool and die and the spinoffs—critically important.” But he says, “We no longer look to steel to be our big employer, because if we still,” as he put it, “if we needed 143,000 people to make that much steel, we still wouldn't have a steel industry.”

And the challenge—when General Electric came back with its appliance industry to Wisconsin—it used to employ 40,000 people and now employs 4,000—they were incredibly disappointed. They produce more appliances in Wisconsin now than ever before but they do it with less than 10%.

My family, as you know, are miners in Sudbury. That's where most of my folks are. My uncles all went

down in the mines. When I was a kid in Sudbury, 10,000 people worked at what is now Vale Inco. Today, 200 go underground and 2,000 people work at Inco there. Most of them work on computers; they don't go down. All my uncles died in their 50s of respiratory illnesses.

This new industrial resource economy is highly robotic—highly. So why are we so much more successful than almost every state and every other province? I want to go back to those 5% of companies, because the manufacturing recovery has recovered those other jobs. The other half are service industries. They're public sector jobs. They're our teachers. There are manufacturing—15,000 more jobs since the recession in the auto sector. But you go to UOIT—and to my friend the MPP from Durham: great school. It's one of the good things your party did when it was in power. You go to UOIT and you learn automotive robotics and software, Mr. Speaker, and then you go and work at General Motors. You do not drop out of high school in grade 10 to get a job on the GM line, because those thousands of jobs that many of our friends who are now 45 and 50 and for whom those jobs were there aren't there. Go and talk to General Motors.

Do you remember the bailout, Mr. Speaker? This government made an investment in private sector infrastructure. We bailed out Chrysler and GM. And what did they do?

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Well, you didn't learn anything, then, my friend from Durham, because what did they do with their money?

Mr. John O'Toole: They didn't pay off their pension deficit, that's for sure.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: What did they do with their money?

Mr. John O'Toole: They basically—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Minister, I would ask you to speak through the Speaker and not get into dialogue.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'm provoking my friend.

What they did with their money, Mr. Speaker, was quite interesting. They modernized their plants. Why did Ford not need a bailout? Because Ford had already modernized its infrastructure. Ford did and survived the 2008 recession because it modernized its industrial infrastructure.

It's interesting now, because the challenge for Arcelor-Mittal, which now has a plant in Brazil that actually generates energy—as you know, ArcelorMittal in Hamilton is our largest industrial steel user.

So to do that, we have to think about energy infrastructure in a new way. We have to build in an innovation economy, and those high-growth companies mostly being run by new Canadians, disproportionately, South Asian new Canadians and middle-aged women in their forties, fifties and sixties who got tired of the glass ceiling and the bureaucracies of the large private sector companies, who quit, created their own companies and sell their services back to those companies at twice the pay—

running their own company and busting the patriarchy of male-dominated hierarchies. Bravo. Women are some of our biggest entrepreneurs, creating a lot of those jobs.

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So how do we ensure that those jobs are not just concentrated—as they are in too many countries—in the big cities? How do we make sure that Oshawa diversifies? How do we make sure that Cornwall, Dryden, Kapuskasing, Chatham and Echo Bay—because if you can plug and play in this new easily distributed community, you need all kinds of infrastructure. You need water and sewer systems that demonstrate Zenon technology from Hamilton and demonstrate Trojan's technology from London, that you can go into our water treatment plants and see the very best of Canadian technology at work.

One of the things this bill does is it builds the kind of cultural infrastructure to give Sudbury the quality of life that it needs to maintain a culturally diverse and exciting community, so that Sudbury doesn't have just great roads and sewers and great infrastructure and good highways, but we have excellent cultural infrastructure. We're going to hire architects and designers to design our roads so that when there's a new bridge in Kenora, it's a spectacular new bridge. We're going to get a spectacular new bridge in Windsor to go with the spectacular new parkway. We're now going to involve designers and architects in that, because that's important.

But, Mr. Speaker, I kind of love this House. I think it's a huge privilege to be a parliamentarian, and, from all three parties, I have lots of friends in this House, and I really enjoy them. Many of them are here today. We were talking about Herb Epp and about how wonderful it is when we actually just get to share ideas. I've often said my favourite hours in this House are Thursday afternoons, because we all get to be friends. Party labels fall away, and we can actually talk about bills that each of us have passions for.

I hope that you will see this bill as a non-partisan piece; I hope that every member will feel comfortable bringing their ideas to that. As we go to committee with this, I think there's a good platform. I think this bill is a good bill; I think it can be a better bill.

We have the Thunder Bay Consolidated Courthouse. Just go and see: That is one of the greenest buildings. It's an amazing piece of infrastructure.

We put a law school into Thunder Bay so that now legal work is going to happen in the north. Northerners don't have to come south when we open up the Ring of Fire, when we do the twinning of the highways. All that legal work and expertise in resource management can now be trained there.

Fanshawe College's Centre for Digital and Performing Arts provides one of the most sophisticated digital platforms in the world in London-Fanshawe. I know the member there is a champion of it, and the previous member. This is really exciting stuff. People in London, which has a great arts and cultural scene, are now going to be able to take that digital into the virtual economy. Again, it will help accelerate—we want those 5% of businesses to be 10%, and we want them all across Ontario.

The Niagara Health System's new St. Catharines hospital site is creating a cluster to support an aging population and keep seniors working well.

The Union shed revitalization, where we brought architects and engineers—which will now be a requirement on those major projects, not just serendipitous luck—go and see it. It is a marvel. The busiest transportation hub in North America, soon to be connected with the Union Pearson Express, soon to have our major transit hub down there for buses and GO: This is going to be one of the great welcoming portals. When you arrive at Union Station now, you're going to know that you're in a fabulous province. This is our biggest gateway to the entire transportation network that connects the entire province. It is spectacularly beautiful.

I want to just close up, Mr. Speaker, with—I have a little more I want to say about this. I'm sorry. I worked hard for this bill. You're not cutting me off. Because I want to talk about something that, from when I lived in Toronto in the 1970s and 1980s to today, I've always been in awe of, and it's three gentlemen who, if I could, I would dedicate this bill to. They're three Ontarians who I think were geniuses, and they came from three different professions: R.C. Harris who, 100 years ago, actually in late 1912, became the public works commissioner in the city of Toronto. You'll know the R.C. Harris water treatment plant. If you haven't seen it, when they have Doors Open, go and see it. It's actually open to the public and you can see all the technology, because when they built it after the Great War, they wanted to showcase the technology there. We haven't done that since 1945 when we opened that plant.

Every single new type of water technology—you should be able to go in. We should bring people from China, from Brazil, from Abu Dhabi, so they can see our best technologies. We are the world leaders. We have our agency WaterTAP, which uses infrastructure investments to provoke new investment. We make better water membranes, ultraviolet light treatment. We are the world's leaders in clean water technologies, but we don't have a place to showcase it. You can go to Singapore and see Ontario trilliums all over the new water plant, because their entire integrated water-sewer treatment plant is done with Canadian technology; we use Singapore to sell our Canadian technology and companies into Asian markets. We need to do the same here.

This bill will put that kind of innovation both in our procurement policies and that. But R.C. Harris did that in 1945. We didn't do it since. This year is the 100th anniversary—the 100th anniversary—of a referendum that finally passed after several tries to build what I think is the most powerful symbol of what this bill will do and why this bill is the equivalent of Bill Davis's college bill. It is the infrastructure equivalent. The Prince Edward Viaduct—does anyone know where the Prince Edward Viaduct is? We don't often call it that; it was actually renamed afterward. It is known as the Bloor viaduct, if you like that. It was R.C. Harris's dream.

He had been public works commissioner in the city for less than 12 months, the referendum passes, and he

decides to do something that's never been done before. He says, "We're now going to start requiring architects to be involved in building public works." So he puts out an RFP, and Edmund Burke—not the philosopher, but the great Canadian architect who built what we now call the Bay, the old Simpsons store, which introduced curtain walls for the first time in Canada; a very innovative guy—got hired; an engineer. I want to say to the engineers who feel slighted—I think some of them do, because we didn't put engineers in big headlines in this—we love engineers. You're written into more pieces of legislation than any other profession, save doctors. So to my friends at PEO, know that you are being celebrated in this Legislature.

There was a guy named Thomas Taylor, another great Ontarian. The two of them came together to build what they wanted to be the definitive 20th-century project. They were concerned about creating value and making it beautiful. So they put together the idea of putting in a subway platform. Remember, this is 1913. There were no subways in Toronto; there weren't any subways in Canada. This was the kind of vision that John A. Macdonald had when he built a railroad across wild prairies, through mountains to a fishing village, to build a nation on it. This was the kind of vision that built this country.

It wasn't until 1966 that the subway tracks finally got laid on that platform that had been waiting 50 years for the train to arrive. That kind of vision, of integrated transportation planning, thinking about the best way to move people along the Danforth—eventually it was going to be rapid transit, so let's plan for it and build the infrastructure anticipating it. Let's plan our roads with our subway and public transit system. That's what this bill does. Let's actually get architects and designers so that we're planning to design and engineer the very best and bring professions together to create value. Let's integrate land use planning and look at value, because the entire expansion of Toronto on the other side of the Don Valley only happened after that. The tax base of Toronto started growing exponentially as a result of that piece of infrastructure. Because it was so well planned, it created a whole new amount of land available at low cost for massive expansion into Riverdale and some of the most beautiful neighbourhoods, Greektown, and a cultural dynasty that is part of the brand and part of our quality of life.

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You know, Mr. Speaker, there are going to be people who will say, "This is ridiculous. If you put architects there, you're going to drive up costs." When I was mayor of a city to the west of this province, we introduced something very similar. We started requiring a value-based rather than a cost-management approach. The tax base of Winnipeg was starting to grow by 5% per year. The vacancy rate in downtown Winnipeg in the historic centre was over 60%. At the end of this and a series of fiscal reform policies, the vacancy rate was about 8%. The tax base had grown exponentially. The mill rate in that city dropped by 11%. Taxes were being cut by 2% per year,

and the actual amount of money the government had was growing rapidly, because we were building the tax base based on infrastructure investments, and we were able to reduce the tax burden.

So this may not sound like fiscal policy, but we really do believe—as do the Conservatives in the UK, who have reversed themselves and are now investing in this—that infrastructure creates jobs, improves our quality of life and eliminates the \$6 billion to \$11 billion that we're paying for in lost economic productivity from congestion. And properly planned—based on evidence, transparent and public—it will actually expand our tax base growth for both our municipalities and provinces.

I know it's hard to imagine in Toronto that you could actually see 2% annual tax cuts. If you ran for mayor today and said, "I'm going to promise to cut taxes by 2%," they would think you were some right-wing loony-tune of some sort. But that has actually happened in cities that have actually done that. If you look at London first and the partnerships in London, these infrastructure investments are contributing to higher property values and increased density.

We have half the construction cranes right now in North America hard at work in the GTHA and other parts of Ontario. So we now have to build the infrastructure to keep up with the 49 towers that are going up. That means that if we're not actually doing that, we will have worse congestion.

Toronto is such a successful region. It's going to grow between now and 2031 from six million to nine million people; that's a 50% increase. In the last 10 years, Toronto and Ontario have been so successful that we have added 32 million square feet of office space to the greater Toronto area alone. To give you an idea of the scale of that, Calgary only has 32 million square feet of office space. If you think Alberta's doing well, well, this province has added the equivalent amount of the entire commercial office space in Calgary—added that—to the Toronto economy in the last 10 years alone.

We are growing and booming, and to keep that job creation and that investment growing, we have to spread it across. Not all boats are rising equally. Our attention is in Windsor, in Thunder Bay, in Cornwall, in Ottawa and in small, rural communities with our rural infrastructure programs, which are critical because we can't simply have a recovery in one part of the economy.

I will wrap up with that. I look forward to an engaged debate and the ideas of our friends in the opposition parties. I thank you for your patience, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the privilege of being able to introduce the debate on this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to respond to the Minister of Infrastructure this morning in his leadoff remarks on Bill 141. Later on, through you, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to seek unanimous consent to stand down our critic's lead, Mr. Klees's lead, this morning with the privilege and at the leisure of the House. I'll seek that later.

But many of the comments the minister said this morning are quite visionary and I would say very thoughtful and provocative—he oftentimes is provocative. Really, when talking with our critic—we caucused this bill this week—we could see light in this and vision, and much of it would appear to have been almost stolen from some of our white papers, *Paths to Prosperity*. I'm not trying to create conflict here in any way, but imitation is the finest form of being flattered. Mr. Klees mentioned that, and I probably will use that in my remarks a little later on.

There was quite an interesting article this morning, as well, about the minister. It says, and I'm just reporting here right out of the media: "Glen Murray's High-Occupancy Toll Cookies ... chocolate congestion." It's quite an interesting article about cramming a lot into a little space, crammed full of goodness.

I think in the response when he mentions the job recovery plan—it's a response to the wonderful ideas they've had on Infrastructure Ontario. I might want to challenge a bit of that, but I appreciate his remarks on giving a shout-out to UOIT. UOIT is, of course, the university that was founded when we were in government. I think it was the right thing to do, to transform the auto economy of the Durham region into something quite different. I'll have something to say about that, because you didn't get the job done on the nuclear part.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was rather interesting to listen to what the member had to say. He talked about what infrastructure could do and what infrastructure should do for economies, for communities, for families, but none of that is in Bill 141.

Bill 141 is kind of an easy read—even a pretty light read, I would add. It continues this wrong-headed philosophy that P3s—private-public partnerships—are the way to go. I would tell you that for most of the hospitals that were built under this system, it has not brought anything good. All it does is that the government, our taxes, pay a humongous premium for them to assume risk, but those big conglomerates don't assume any risk whatsoever. They pass it on to the little guys who live in Ontario. The multinationals get the 30% to 40% premium for assuming risk, but they don't take any of the risk. The system is set up so that they will subcontract and subcontract, and it's the little guy at the end that takes all the risk. If, God forbid, it flops in a major way, it's still the taxpayers who are on the hook.

This is still a philosophy that is supported by this bill. If you look at the opportunities in the north for growing our communities through infrastructure projects, most of those projects are still bundled in a way that, rather than building a bridge in Nickel Belt, you have to build 10 bridges through the north. Nobody in Nickel Belt is able to bid on those jobs, but this is what Bill 141 will continue to do.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I'm pleased to respond to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. I would

like to compliment him, first of all, for introducing this bill and also for his speech.

I believe that this bill has a lot of key components that will be very important for the future of Ontario—first of all, the guiding principles it will have to take into consideration. Those include the demographics, the economic trends, advancing the use of new technologies, as the minister mentioned. There is also protecting the environment and considering the impacts of severe weather. I think, for example, of the flooding we had in Toronto and Mississauga on July 8 and the difference a bill such as this could have made to all the infrastructure, all the homes that were damaged during that flooding. It will consider also the life cycle cost of the project, which is very important, especially for our municipalities, and maximizing the tax base growth.

It will also consider skills training and apprenticeship. I believe that's a very important piece of the bill, because it would employ apprentices in the construction and maintenance of the projects. As the minister mentioned, I've been a great supporter of the Hammer Heads program that has been created by the Central Ontario Building Trades. For those who don't know, this is a skills and employment program within the construction industry that offers apprenticeship career opportunities to youth from underserved neighbourhoods in our communities. I represent some of those neighbourhoods. This is making a great difference in the lives of kids who would not have had this opportunity if it were not for programs such as Hammer Heads.

There are also community benefits agreements.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rod Jackson: I'd like to thank the minister for his comments. They're certainly well taken. We certainly do have a lot of infrastructure issues throughout Ontario and indeed throughout the country, I think. It's recognized that many municipalities, especially my own—I know that in Barrie there's a huge infrastructure deficit that needs to be addressed, and in a sustainable way, too.

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I know that as a city councillor in Barrie, we struggled quite often with making sure our infrastructure kept up with the growth of that city. As many of you in this House know, the city of Barrie has grown very rapidly and had some very extreme challenges with its infrastructure, and has done some very unique things, actually, where infrastructure is concerned, as far as prioritizing what infrastructure needs to be fixed in order of importance, not necessarily in order of its visual state.

Also, we have a lot of issues with transportation locally, whether it's the 400 and interchanges that need to be addressed—and are being addressed, albeit I think a little too slowly in many cases—but also with local transportation infrastructure with our bus routes and even our GO train, which has had increased service over the years. Actually, we're quite happy to see some increased summer service that I think shows that there is the capacity in the city for GO to expand further in the future and get more people off the road.

The one thing, though, that I would stress and hope is addressed in a wholesome way eventually—right now, it's kind of addressed in nebulous ways, if I can put it that way—is sustainable funding for municipalities. A lot of the time, it's really difficult for municipalities to have a long-term plan for their infrastructure because they really don't know what's coming from year to year or how the funding is going to happen. It changes from time to time, from year to year, and it really puts cities like Barrie in a very difficult position as far as creating their budgets, where they do have a significant infrastructure deficit going forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Minister, you have two minutes.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thanks very much to all my colleagues who did that.

Yes, the employment piece is extremely important. Helmets to Hardhats and those programs are particularly critical.

My friend from Nickel Belt raises that point: We are not assuming that everything is going to be AFP. As a matter of fact, we are now evaluating projects in the north. In the north, if you're doing large highways, which involve multiple components, sometimes AFP makes sense, other times it doesn't. So we're going through this lens, and this bill I think will allow us to have a more sophisticated and critical look at AFPs, about where they work and where they don't. I think we don't want to take an ideological position for or against them but look at practical evidence. So I take your point and will assure you that those concerns are registered.

I want to also thank my friend from Durham. I think I agree with him on the training to do that. My mother always said to me that if you don't worry about who gets credit for things, a lot more gets done, so I'm quite happy to share the ideas and the credit on that.

My friend from Barrie makes a very good point, because it's actually interesting. Mayor Lehman and the council that he was part of I think have done a very good job. They've increased their transit capacity by 30%, working with us and the province. We've enhanced GO services, as the member for Barrie pointed out, and I know he's been a champion of that. That's important. Some 30% of people who live in Barrie work in Barrie. Mayor Lehman and I are trying to integrate transportation and land use and economic planning because the best way to reduce infrastructure costs is proximity, not connectivity. So the more people who live and work and play in Barrie—if we could get that up to 60% and increase Barrie's economic base, that's a lot better investment than widening the 400 highway wider and wider until it looks like the 401. So part of the strategy is to actually have proximity and complete communities where people can live, work and play, and don't need to commute at all, which is why planning is so important.

Mr. Speaker, and to all my colleagues, thank you. I hope there will be a spirit of non-partisanship in improving this bill, and I look forward to their ideas and their partnerships.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. John O'Toole: First, Speaker, I'd like to seek unanimous consent to stand down the one-hour lead by our critic on this file, Mr. Klees.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Durham has requested unanimous consent to stand down their lead. Agreed? Agreed.

The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm privileged to be here this morning and to respond to the minister in two minutes but also have a little longer to dwell on it.

I should say this: that in the spirit of co-operation—and he had a couple of zingers during his remarks. So I'll start with the zingers and finish off on a more harmonious note. The one is, I think the word “sustainability” is used frequently. Now, my interpretation of sustainability, and the member from Barrie mentioned it as well, is that sustainability, in its simplest form, is enough for everyone forever. That's what sustainability is: enough for everyone forever. This means we have to change the rules of how things are shared, and if you look at Ontario or Canada, in the context of the world, with 32 million or whatever people—cities in China are larger. If you look at the western hemisphere, we're all pretty well off really, to the greatest extent, even South America, Central America, Mexico's an emergent economy, Brazil etc.—the US struggles—Ontario and Canada.

And there are less than a billion people in the western hemisphere. There are more people in India than all of the western hemisphere. We all have two cellphones, two cars, a home, a cottage—I'm generalizing, of course. We're pretty well off. We use a lot more energy per capita; we use a lot more everything per capita. There may be some reasons, weather-wise and all that kind of stuff—that's the good way to put things into context in a globalized sense.

When you look at books talking in the visionary terms that Minister Murray speaks of, it's important to put the context around these things, how we share the resources of the world, because there's a finite amount of stuff. If you look at Friedman's book on globalization, really, there are three themes in it: the world is hot—global warming; flat—digitalization; and crowded—seven billion people with not enough to eat, and 20% of them don't have enough every day. So that's the context.

When we look at ourselves, we look within the sectors of the economy: We look at the public sector, the private sector and the business sector. This is my second zinger, and it is meant in humorous terms, because you'd say it if you were here: In Ontario, my experience has been over the last 10 years—how do you create a small business? You start with a large one and keep taxing it and hacking away at it until it no longer exists.

Basically, I worked for 31 years with General Motors, and prior to that, I worked with IBM. I saw the whole industry change, and he's right. He's saying that whether it's Pittsburgh or even, for that matter, Oshawa—when I was there, I at one time was a computer guy and then I

was in personnel, labour relations, and then in salary and bonus administration, and then eventually manager of an area of a plant. At that time, I think there were 22,000 employees. Now we're looking forward to the 2016 agreement, when we end up with this agreement of the 2008 bailout, and whether or not General Motors will be in Canada. In fact, some of the information that I hear now is that the new Camaro and some of the newer vehicles could be in Mexico or South America and even Michigan, because Michigan now is fighting the consequences of a fractured Detroit economy.

Some of those factors are part of that globalization issue—where is it cheaper to make stuff?—which is an unfortunate challenge. Even if I look at the great success stories of Canada in the recent past, BlackBerry—Research In Motion—I remember when the teachers' pension fund had a huge chunk of that, plus I remember they had a big chunk of Nortel, and if they're not quickly and nimbly moving out of those technology sectors that are disappearing, where are we in this kind of sustainable economy inventing the future?

Now, when I look at how work is created today—and you said it—it's plug and play. I agree 100%. I have five children. Three of them work in Hong Kong, England and the Isle of Man. That's the future. When I look at these pages—the world is digitally connected. The best place to do banking and commerce—my son-in-law is a securities lawyer—is London. The time zones all work, whether you're working with Brazil, Hong Kong or Russia. That's the central place where they can connect 24/7, because of the Greenwich mean time, I think. That's what he has told me, anyway, and actually his three major clients are Russia, Brazil and India. I'm not sure who does what, but he works from home. It's all online. He's doing a couple of things, building contracts with various players, and also the financing rules.

But that's the new economy we're really talking about, which raises the question, relevant to Bill 141, of what kind of infrastructure we need. We need the digital infrastructure, and rural Ontario is struggling now with connectivity.

Even now, in my riding, for instance, the smart meter—it's not a slam on Minister Chiarelli, but in my riding we've gone universally with the smart meters, which aren't smart, by the way. They're time-of-use meters. With a smart meter—I have one—I can phone my cottage and turn on the hot tub. They're connected to the circuit.

1000

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Oh, you have a hot tub at your cottage.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, I'm not kidding. You can turn on stuff from your phone. Just phone a number, put in a code, and it turns it on. That's a smart meter.

This time-of-use meter was the way they doubled the price, but also they're doing the billing at the time of consumption, which is important. What they're trying to do is flatten out the demand curve. The demand curve in electricity is very high in the mornings, flattens out to

around 15,000 megawatts, and goes very high in the evening. They're trying to make it around 18,000 megawatts so that they don't need to have all these peaking plants; just run it all flatline on nuclear, I hope.

The reason I say this: In the rural parts of Ontario, where they don't have good connectivity and we're using a smart meter and the signal is not too strong, what time did they actually use the electrons? They're getting a blended bill. They don't know whether it's blended at the five-cent rate or the 10-cent rate. I have written to the minister on it. It's not a matter of finger-pointing; it's the matter that one size does not fit all.

When you're looking at infrastructure and you're looking in Toronto and the GTA congestion, it's tragic and it's a drag on the economy. We all get that. But there are other solutions that needed to be put. And I would say that, a good example—and I'm in London frequently. Hong Kong has a marvellous transit system. If you want to get to the best jewellery stores, the best restaurants, you have to take the subway. The subway is all developed this way. The subway is the third dimension of development. We've got on-the-ground, we've got up-in-the-air and now we've got under-the-ground. It's three-dimensional development. Underground in Hong Kong is incredible.

Here's another example of where we went wrong. The Presto card, which should be examined by the public accounts committee, under Metrolinx, I suppose, is wildly overbudget and completely uninteractive. I understand it was quite a sluggish mess to get the TTC to sign on to it in the first place about the smart card. I have a Presto card. I do use transit. I come to work on the GO train. Here's the issue: Over there, they have a cash card. You can buy a coffee, a newspaper, take a taxi, take the ferry and go on the subway, all with the same card. You can load that card at Mac's Milk. All the receipts somehow get transferred to my bill and somebody that was charged gets paid for providing the service, whether it's the paper or the bus or the taxi. It's all handled seamlessly. Now we've got the Presto card, which is non-interactive. Do you understand? You have to line up in some queue, or the system is down so you can't load it.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It has that capacity.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's not. Anyway, we could go off-line. I use it and I'm frustrated with it, because sometimes I want to charge the card. I've got it set up now that it automatically flips \$50 a week into the card, so I don't have to line up anymore. But when the system goes down and stuff like that—and I do have the app on my phone, which was developed by Ryerson.

I know that the new economy is here. I just wonder, out loud here—this isn't in any white paper, but I'm talking to a visionary, and I mean that quite sincerely—I would wonder why anyone in law or banking would be coming to Toronto to work. Why?

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, why? The future—the minister knows this. What major companies are doing today—and I know this personally. Rather than having the big

headquarters where they're paying \$50,000 in taxes, plus the utilities and all the stuff, they call it "hotelling." They rent a floor in a hotel. They write it all off. There's no capital tied up. It's all operating. Mondays, they have the advertising group. Accounts payable are on Tuesday; accounts receivable on Wednesday. The rest of them are plugged and played, have a card with a smart card in it, and they can log on to secure networks and do whatever it is, marketing or planning or product development or whatever they're doing, and no capital or real estate are tied up. They come together for socializing reasons, really, and team-building, as opposed to working in compact quarters, being frustrated for two hours of commuting time saying, "What is going on here?"

Today we have the OSSTF here, which is wonderful. My wife is a retired teacher. My daughter is a high school vice-principal in England—the one I mentioned—and was educated here, of course, at Western and at Lakehead University. So I'm just saying that how we deliver education is going to change profoundly. It isn't about the answer today—Columbus sailed the ocean blue; it's not about that. It's learning how to get the information. Where is the data? Google it or how—it's totally different.

I'm over 70, so it's totally different. When I was hired by IBM, it was all unit record. There was no digital format. It was all mechanical. Binary was the system that—everything was a switch: yes or no. It still works that way today. We just don't see the background behind some of the algorithms that drive the things that happen in front of us on the screen. But everything's going to be changed by it. As I said, why would somebody working at a high level in banking or finance—think about it—be coming to a cubicle in Toronto, spending two hours getting there, two hours getting home, and maybe the system could be down or whatever? So I think that will be done differently.

I think Hansard here could easily be transcribed by voice recognition, and it probably is. They're working on it in Ottawa. I know that. My son's a federal member and tells me this is what they're doing. Other parts of the country do it differently.

Every single thing we do will be renewed. I think some of the futurists talked about it being the third wave or the fourth wave or whatever, but I think we are moving there, and we need to build the infrastructure that's required.

Now, I look at transit. Transit's important. Anyone who talks against it is not thinking about it. How we implement it is what's wrong. To get the gas money provincially—not federally—you had to actually have buses. So everybody's got all these buses running around with nobody in them most of the time. In my riding, now we've got double-decker buses on the—what do they call it?—the Pulse system, and the minister's here. In some respects, it works.

Now, if you're going to run something in the public sector seven days a week, 24 hours a day, every job takes five people. That's the numeracy around 24/7 jobs. For

every job, it takes five people. Let's take if we're going to implement 24/7 fire protection in every community in Ontario—completely unsustainable in the current way we do it, because the response legislation and regulations say there has to be five people on the truck to make it work right. Now, how are they going to pay for that in Norwood or Hastings where they have no industry? Their tax base is pretty much residential tax.

I just moved about three years ago. My taxes were \$7,500. I was living in the country. I had a well and septic. I paid for it. I didn't pay for the pipe coming up to my house. My taxes were \$7,500. Holy smokes. I said, "The way it's going—well, it's only going up by the cost of a coffee a day." Well, it turns out a coffee is five bucks a day; times 300 days—do the numbers. So it's only going up by the price of a coffee a day.

That's overly simplistic, because if you look at the math behind that, I figured my tax is going to be \$10,000 within six years. Here's what I figured: It was soon going to cost me \$1,000 a month to own my own house. That's not paying heat and hydro and all that kind of stuff—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: The hot tub.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, that's why I have a smart meter: You can turn it off.

I only say that as examples of trying to do things the way we've done them is probably the wrong solution.

Now, I'm going to put a couple things more on track here. There's a couple of very interesting reports. I know the minister's big on Roger Martin's book. It's worth a read. He's, I think, the dean of the Rotman school of business, Martin Prosperity Institute at Rotman's. This has pretty informative graphs, where we are on GDP per capita.

I would say the Canada-EU free trade agreement is very important. I think there will be sectors that will have to be restructured or—we don't want people to be out of work, that's for sure. I'm not sure what the jobs would be.

Remember how I started this: Enough for everyone forever. That's sustainability. It's important that we understand that. You can't have some people making \$100,000, and then a big gap, and then people making \$20,000. What's that about? They can't even afford the taxes on their house, the transit, the electricity—that's the biggest single complaint we get today. In fact, that's one of the reports I want to make reference to. It's important for all members to get it. We all got it; read it.

The other one is a report for a call to action by the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters. I will get into something a little bit more substantive here. These are all generalizations, much in respect to responding to the creativity of the minister himself. He did give a shout-out to UOIT, University of Ontario Institute of Technology. That university was set up with a different governing structure originally. It has since gone back.

I want to shout out—Tim McTiernan is the president of the university: a great person, a wonderfully respected academic and a very thoughtful person. He was dean of innovation at the University of Toronto before he came—

a very appropriate partner and leader in the community. We look to the academic institutions to be the visionaries for building these new economies we keep referring to. That's short term, by the way, to the pages here.

I worked for a company for 30 years. That's all finished. I'm sorry. When that collapsed, so did the whole idea of pensions, when companies don't want the liability. So today, the jobs of the future will be—and there's been books written: *People Without Jobs*, *Jobs Without People*, Miner's book—a very important book, too.

What I find interesting there is that most of the jobs—companies themselves, BlackBerry, Research In Motion, whatever, won't last beyond 10 years. The technology will supersede them. The investor will yank out the value part, sell it off to a larger company, mergers and conglomerates. That's how it's working today. So the jobs will be contract, bonused and tenured somehow.

I guess it's depressing to some extent, but rather than making \$50,000 a year for 10 years, you'll probably make \$500,000 in two years, and you'll really be at the high point of your life, much like athletes today. They get \$10 million, and then they're done work at 30, 33 or something. And I don't even agree with that. It comes back to what I said before, the division of how the tax rules work so that everyone gets to share in it. But I think people, in the execution of their dream and their talents—whether it's music, art, electricity, whatever it is, their real reward is the pride of doing it, like a reward of some sort. Hopefully, it's money and food and things like that. Then, I guess, you look at these rules that I'm talking about, employment and how people are rewarded and how they transfer from various parts of the world to do what it is they do.

I think when you look around in the culture we live in, it's happening without us really having a plan in place because of the diversity. People are demanding different types of food. There are different types of entertainment, different types of religions and events that are new and exciting to them and maybe reminding them of where they came from, and I think that's all great. It enriches our lives as long as we're comfortable with ourselves. I think that's important.

I talked a bit about the Pittsburgh scenario. That's a case where technology can actually change how we do things, and that's an important lesson. We can do more with less. So, when we look at organizations where people say, "I'm going to be here for 30 years. There's a vertical ascent in my pay and benefits, and the last three years qualify me for some kind of factor in my pension. Maybe my productivity's actually going this way," you've got to look at some of these changes. People who are really firing on all cylinders should be rewarded, and I think the best way to do it is bonusing, because it doesn't affect these other legacy entitlements. Bonusing for somebody who's really making an effort, whether it's for the music class, the art class or the football team, I'm all in favour of.

Now it doesn't fit into these—you've got 15 years and here's where you are on the grid, and this is what you

should get, and forget all the other achievements. I think that's poor, and it doesn't incent innovation. Some people may want to take the creativity of their life and apply it to their community, in volunteerism, or in their family. I think how we do things has to change, and some of our entitlements have to change along with it.

I talked, for instance, about the 5% creating 60% of the jobs. He's right on that because, really, a lot of these small businesses are flexible and focused. I met some of the people who have been lobbying this week with the environmental group on Bill 91—very innovative people, inventing filters and other kinds of products that deal with environmental issues or just the air we breathe. They'll make probably a fair amount of money over a short period of time, and they do create jobs. They create training in those jobs by passing on what they're bringing to a product that may exist to improve it and make it better, and the people who may be there for a short period of time may pick up some of those skills or knowledge to be innovators themselves.

I think the one small part that I wanted to get to—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): This House stands recessed until 10:30 a.m.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

WEARING OF BUTTONS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Mr. Speaker, I believe you'll find that we have unanimous consent today that all members be permitted to wear these red buttons to remember the victims of violence against women.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The minister has requested unanimous consent. Agreed? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to introduce Bonnie Cameron, a teacher at West Hill, and Krista McCormick, an ed assistant. They're in the members' west gallery—great members from the great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to introduce a friend of mine with the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation. Martha Marucci has joined us in the west gallery as well. Martha, welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Would you please help me welcome two individuals here who are with the OSSTF: David Mathers from Kingston, and John Fenik from Perth. They're in the east gallery. John is also the mayor of Perth.

While I'm on my feet, on behalf of Bill Mauro, the member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan, I would like to

introduce the following OSSTF members from north-western Ontario who are in the members' gallery as well. We have with us Sue Smith, Pat Gibbs, Duane Roen, Paul Caccamo, Maria Gavin, Buzz Grebenc, Carlos Santander-Maturan, Stephen Wilson and Joshua Spencer. Let's welcome them.

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to welcome two high school teachers from Centennial Secondary School in Belleville, members of the OSSTF, Keith Sled and Jason Bremner, to the Legislature today.

It's also a pleasure to welcome the family of one of our page captains today, Morgan Beatty, from Tweed, in Prince Edward-Hastings. She has her mother, Leslie Beatty, here as well as her brother, Isaac Beatty, and her grandparents Peter and Donna Sullivan. Welcome to the Legislature.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I would like to welcome the family of page Jonathan Yapeter. They're here in the east members' gallery. The parents are Janny Simarno and Yimmy Yapeter.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I would like to introduce Jared Hunt, who teaches at Widdifield Secondary School in North Bay; Glen Hodgson, who teaches at Parry Sound High School; and Kerri Renaud, who is a child development counsellor at Chippewa Secondary School in North Bay. Welcome.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I want to welcome all of our OSSTF representatives today, who are here to talk about the future of education in the province of Ontario. We welcome them, thank them for their ongoing dialogue with members of the assembly and look forward to talking with them in our respective offices today.

Hon. Mario Sergio: I'm delighted to welcome to Queen's Park the parents of page Ana Chu Wong: her mom, Huang Xing Bo, and her dad, Da Cai Cao. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It gives me great privilege to stand here and introduce the family of page captain Payton Smith, the daughter of my good friend Todd Smith, the member for Prince Edward-Hastings: her mother, Tawnya Smith, sister Reagan Smith, and her grandparents Dennis and Carol Hubble, as well as cousin Alex Calderon. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'd also like to welcome all of the OSSTF members. Thank you for a great breakfast. In particular, I would like to recognize the OSSTF members from Mississauga: Brian Grandy, Mike Bettiol, Mary Arseneau and Katherine Petrick. Welcome.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to introduce Sherry Zarins and Andrea Stevens-Lavigne from the lung association, and three constituents of mine: Judy Legg, Sandra Gibbons and Rose Gibbons. Welcome to the Legislature.

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'ai de la grande visite aujourd'hui. C'est M^{me} Ginette Lefebvre qui est venue me voir, de mon comté. Elle fait partie de la Fédération des enseignantes-enseignants des écoles secondaires de l'Ontario. Je lui souhaite la bienvenue ainsi qu'à tous ses collègues.

Hon. Jeff Leal: In the members' east gallery today, we have OSSTF members from the wonderful riding of Peterborough: Gary Fenn, Dave Warda and Janie Kelly.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'd like to welcome OSSTF members from Sarnia-Lambton, Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and London: Steven Lynch, Blair Middleton and Hendrikus Bervoets.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I'd like to welcome Ghozal Amin, the sister of my executive assistant, who is here in the east members' gallery.

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to welcome Glen Hodgson here today from the Near North District School Board, an OSSTF rep and teacher from Parry Sound.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to welcome Sherry Freund, Diane Flewwelling and Rob Gascho from OSSTF K-W.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm pleased to welcome the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance here today, with executive director Rylan Kinnon, Thomas Pritchard and Allison Williams from Queen's, President Amir Eftekarpour and Patrick Whelan from Western, Adam Garcia from the University of Waterloo, Roland Erman from Brock University and Chris Fernlund from Trent University in Oshawa.

Mr. John O'Toole: I also would like to welcome and thank the teachers from Durham, members of OSSTF. I spoke with a couple, especially Karen Littlewood, who's from the riding of Durham.

Miss Monique Taylor: I would like to welcome my dear friend Alexander Brown, who is here today with the OSSTF teachers. I know there are teachers from Hamilton here also, but I haven't seen them in the House yet, and I'm expecting my dear seatmate behind me here to welcome them.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I too want to welcome all the reps from OSSTF, of course, but I'd also like to specifically welcome the students from West Hill Collegiate Institute in Scarborough, my alma mater. We have Kasi James-Aikins, Des-Ree Brown, Robert Ehmke and their teacher, Mike Stevens. These students won an opportunity to have lunch with myself and MPP Hunter from Scarborough East. These students correctly identified the year of my graduation from West Hill Collegiate.

Mr. John Yakubuski: I would like to welcome representatives from my riding with the OSSTF, Jeffrey Barber and Jared Hunter, who are joining us today.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'd like to extend a warm welcome to the two OSSTF members I met in the London area. Thank you to Blair Middleton and Hendrikus Bervoets for coming to meet with me today.

Hon. Charles Sousa: It gives me great pleasure to welcome Greg Vezina and Kathy Vezina, who are here in the Legislature on behalf of the Mississauga Waterfront Festival to support children's programs. Thank you for being here at Queen's Park.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I want to welcome today two members from OSSTF that I met this morning from my riding: Del Jones, and from Alexandria in north Glenarry, Francinna Collard.

Mr. Paul Miller: I also have members of the OSSTF here: Anthony Marco from Hamilton, Chantal Mancini and Lyla Miklos.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'd like to welcome Paul Elliott, the president of OSSTF, and all the executive members of OSSTF and all the staff members of OSSTF who are here today, and all the education workers from all over the province.

Mr. John Yakubuski: Speaker, I'm actually correcting my record. It is Jared Hunt who is here with Jeffrey Barber today.

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Hon. James J. Bradley: I would like us to join together in welcoming, from the District School Board of Niagara and the Niagara Peninsula OSSTF, Daniel Peat, Lindsay Chase and John-Paul Cote.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's a great pleasure to introduce a hard-working volunteer and community activist from my riding of Richmond Hill, Gazal Amin, sitting in the members' gallery over there.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you, and good morning, all.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Minister, good morning. On Monday you released a 33% to 50% rate hike on Ontario families and small businesses. When I asked you two days ago what the impact would be from the gas plant scandal in Mississauga and Oakville, you said it hadn't been included yet. Then, after question period you had to retract that statement and correct your record.

What is clear is that this government doesn't know what its energy policy actually means to the people across this province. That's why, earlier today, I put forward a substantial motion asking your government to go back one year to provide us all documents with respect to the gas plant cancellation and its impact on the ratepayer base as it is seen in the long-term energy plan.

The question is simple: Will you co-operate with the committee to ensure that those documents are in our hands within six weeks from today?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Sit down, please.

The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the member for Nepean-Carleton is on another wish hunt—W-I-S-H. She's wishing that her imagination comes true. The information that was provided in committee and provided to the Auditor General was quite clear, and she chooses to misconstrue it. "Misconstrue" is not unparliamentary, Mr. Speaker, because I actually looked it up in the dictionary. The word "misconstrue" means "to fail to understand the true or actual meaning." And there are a number of syn-

onyms. The others synonyms are “to misapprehend, to misconstrue, to misinterpret, to mis-know, to misperceive, to misread, to miss, or a mistake.” I would choose the word “mistake,” because the chair of the OPA was at committee. He showed the calculations on the costs, and they actually amount to \$1 to \$2 per year over 20 years, Mr. Speaker. She doesn’t want to admit it. She chooses to misconstrue it and she wants to obfuscate the truth.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I’ll ask the minister to withdraw.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: “Obfuscate the truth”? Yes, I withdraw.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It is very clear that the minister still doesn’t understand the implications of his long-term energy act and its cost on the rate base in this province. He doesn’t seem to understand that it is a job killer. He doesn’t understand that he actually has to respond to this assembly. That is why we put forward a very sensible, substantive motion to prove to the ratepayers of Ontario that that government stole \$1 billion of their money and misspent it and lied to them.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Sit down, please. Order.

I would ask the member to withdraw.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Minister?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Sometimes the best defence is a good offence, Mr. Speaker, and we’re seeing a tremendous offence here from the critic. What she’s trying to not talk about is the comment of her leader from a couple of days ago. When the Leader of the Opposition was asked if he could promise lower electricity rates, he said, “The answer is no on that.” So I would like to know what your policy is on rates. How high will you let rates go? He’s very, very clearly on the record. And it wasn’t only the Leader of the Opposition—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Member for Simcoe–Grey, come to order.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —it was the leader of the third party who said the same thing.

Mr. Speaker, in the next supplementary I’m going to provide some other useful information for the public.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Final supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Listen, the problem is credibility. There’s a massive gap between what this minister says and actual fact. He’s the only Minister of Energy in the province’s history who instead—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock.

All of you are making it most difficult. I have to hear the question, and I will try to hear the answer. We’re not doing very good for a Thursday.

Question.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks, Speaker. It is very hard to try and speak over the hollers of the Liberal Party because of their credibility—the credibility that they have lost. They have mismanaged \$1.1 billion of people’s money in this province. They chose—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask you to withdraw, again.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn.

Minister, you don’t know your own energy plan. You don’t know where the \$1.1 billion went. You don’t know where the 300,000 jobs went. You’ve made a mess of this file.

Will you commit to the committee to work with them to ensure we get the facts, not constant contradictions from you and all of your bureaucrats? Will you commit to that today so I have that information in my hands in the next six weeks, yes or no?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock.

Hon. James J. Bradley: No teacher-bashing today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of the Environment, come to order.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Is this quiet enough?

Minister.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, let’s look at some facts. According to the National Energy Board—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock.

I can stand here all morning.

Minister.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, according to the National Energy Board, these are the price increases that are projected over the next 20 years for five of the larger provinces, and these are 20-year projections: Alberta, 3.7% per year; BC, 3% per year. That’s 60% over 20 years. In Manitoba, it’s 3.2%; Quebec, 3%. Again, that’s 60% over 20 years. In Saskatchewan, it’s 3.3%. Our long-term energy plan, over 20 years, projects the cost increases to be 2.8%, Mr. Speaker. We’re better than all of those other provinces for the next 20 years.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is to the Acting Premier. Acting Premier, it seems your government is particularly good at writing press releases, but very lacking in following through on what they promise. When you proclaimed, “Thousands of Jobs Coming to Northern Ontario,” from a press release issued on May 9, 2012, with regard to the Ring of Fire, your government failed to deliver. It is clear now that there was no concrete plan to back up this empty promise.

Only weeks ago, you rushed to announce that a development corporation had been established. I don’t

disagree with the concept, although you've been talking about the Ring of Fire for years in throne speeches, budgets and economic updates. So Acting Premier, if you're really serious about creating jobs, shouldn't your government have created this development corporation four years ago?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question because it speaks about something critical to the province of Ontario and, for that matter, to all of Canada. The Ring of Fire and the development of the chromite deposits, one of the largest in the world, is critical to the livelihood of every Canadian, not just Ontarians. We have taken actions, and we have put forward the development corporation as well as put forward a number of stakeholders, partnering with aboriginal and First Nations communities as well as the Métis Nation to ensure that we have access to these chromite deposits. A number of proponents are interested, and we'll continue to work with them. We need all forms of government on board to make this happen. It's one of the reasons the Premier is now in Ottawa.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Final supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Acting Premier, well, so far you've failed miserably on the Ring of Fire.

Acting Premier, your lack of answers on the development corporation is troubling, so it does appear to be yet another empty press release.

And before you go looking for money from the federal government, don't you think you should have a plan of your own? A transportation link for the Ring of Fire is critical to the success of the project and for the First Nation communities in the area. Now that Cliffs has pulled the plug on the Ring of Fire, are you talking with other miners in the region, including Noront, who has their proposed east-west connection?

1050

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, as noted, the province of Ontario has been taking leadership on the issues around developing the Ring of Fire for some years now. We have recognized the importance of this development for all of Canada.

We must make note: The member opposite feels it's not necessary to engage the federal government on this critically important issue. They should be at the table from the start, and they have not—in fact, I find that it's all but passing strange that infrastructure projects on a national level are made in British Columbia—they're made in the Northwest Transmission Line of British Columbia—they're made in the lower Churchill hydro-electric project in Labrador, they're made in Alberta, and they haven't been made in Ontario.

It is critical that we get all orders of government on board. Ontario has been the only level of government that's taken that leadership. We will continue to do so, and it's why so many other proponents are still interested in making that development happen.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Again to the Acting Premier: I didn't say you shouldn't engage the federal government; I said you should have a plan before you engage the—

Interjections.

Mr. Norm Miller: We know the Premier is in Ottawa today meeting with the Prime Minister. We know you like to blame the federal government for your failures, but it's your government that is sending all the wrong signals. Mining companies are suing your government. In fact, one is currently in court for over \$100 million for not fulfilling your duties.

Acting Premier, thousands of potential jobs are at stake. We have cleared the decks here in this Legislature. You have had plenty of time to work on this. When are you going to get your act together and show us your jobs plan for the Ring of Fire?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Sit down, please.

Acting Premier?

Hon. Charles Sousa: They have cleared the deck—they've completely cleared themselves of any plan whatsoever.

Over the course of what they've discussed has been a very regressive system. I say to the member, what happened to the progressive nature of the Conservative Party on that side of the House? You have not put forward a positive plan to support jobs in our province.

We will continue to invest in the skills of our people to promote the Ring of Fire. We'll continue to invest in infrastructure projects to enable projects like the Ring of Fire to come to fruition. We're investing while you're suggesting we should make cuts all across the board.

In fact, we know, when we speak to other stakeholders and so forth, they make note of the fact that Ontario is an attractive place to invest in because of the investments that we're making in our future and because of the way we're stimulating economic growth and attracting that investment to Ontario, including the Ring of Fire.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. People in Ontario haven't seen a raise in years, but electricity bills are going up by 40% to pay for growing private power deals. People are telling us that they think the Premier just doesn't get it. Can the Acting Premier explain to people why the Liberal government is more interested in their own political power than in getting power bills under control?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, it's necessary to invest in transmission, it's necessary to invest in our electricity integrity, and it's something that has been neglected and was neglected for many years.

Fortunately, our government has now built well over 20 new power plants in this province. We will continue to invest in infrastructure to support that integrity in our electricity system, to maintain our competitiveness in the future. That requires a mix of all products.

The member opposite makes claims about the pricing. That's exactly why we need to have a long-term solution, provided by the Minister of Energy, to support that competitiveness in the future, which is now as competitive as any of the Great Lakes states and other provinces—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Liberal power schemes have padded the profit margins of private interests and left people and businesses in this province with the bill. Whether it's the \$150 million that people are paying to US hedge funds for the Mississauga gas plant cancellation or the hundreds of millions wasted on the Oakville gas plant, the fact is that private power interests are watching the cheques roll in while people are worried about the bills rolling in.

Can the Acting Premier explain why the Liberal government doesn't seem to care that people are worried about making ends meet?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we've taken a number of steps to support consumers by providing the clean energy benefit. We've taken steps to provide clean energy in this province as a result. The member opposite has yet to show us their plan.

In fact, they have denied any support for nuclear. They are opposed to refurbishment of 50% of our base supply as it stands now. They haven't supported the green energy initiatives to provide for another 30,000 more jobs, not to mention cleaner energy, and they have yet to decide how it is they want to promote and provide for that integrity, because we need to invest in infrastructure and distribution.

They have also opposed those initiatives. Those are critical for our long-term competitiveness and to ensure that both consumers and industry have reliability of power in our province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Minister of Energy said that it's just "a fact of life" that the bills keep going up. The fact of life is that people can't afford the bills that keep going up. Every month when people open their power bill, they're feeling squeezed, and no matter what they do the bills keep getting bigger and bigger. Does the Liberal government not get how important this is to people, or do they simply not care?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The NDP are supporting and promoting the elimination of private investment in our province; that's essential for Ontario and for our competitiveness, and that would create thousands of jobs. They want instead to create an energy superbureaucracy that doesn't encourage investment in Ontario.

In fact, it's Ontario's hybrid system, a mix of both publicly owned and private investments, that help drive our economy and create tens of thousands of jobs for Ontarians. We must always consider the implications of creating jobs in our province. That's what this is about.

Maintaining competitiveness and reliability is essential, not just for consumers, but for industry. In fact, I'll

quote here from the Canadian Automotive Partnership Council: "The highest priority for large industrial consumers is access to reliable electricity infrastructure"—something Ontario didn't have during the brownout era of Mike Harris as well.

ENERGY CONTRACTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Acting Premier. Every time the Liberals had a chance to get the hydro bills under control, they chose to help out private power companies instead. After 90 minutes at the gas plants committee, the Premier couldn't explain why she signed an arbitration agreement that the Auditor General said gave the upper hand to TransCanada. When the Premier had a chance to get a better deal for Ontarians, she chose to be a good Liberal, and not rock the boat.

Does the Liberal government even care that the Premier helped TransCanada get the upper hand over Ontario families?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We have three priorities, and they're equal priorities, in managing the energy system: one is reliability, two is clean, and three is affordable. We spent \$31 billion over 10 years making it reliable, from deficit to surplus, and making it clean, from dirty coal to clean energy.

There are pressures on prices as a result of that \$31 billion of investment, but what we have done to transition is to create some support for the people of Ontario by creating the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit, a 10% discount; the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit, saving qualifying individuals up to \$963 per year, with a maximum of \$1,000 for qualifying seniors; the Northern Ontario Energy Credit; the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program; and the saveONenergy Home Assistance Program.

That party voted for some of these supports for the people of Ontario. They should be ashamed of themselves.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Talking points simply don't help people pay the bills. With this government, instead of asking whether there's a business case for nuclear refurbishments worth millions and millions of dollars—billions, in fact—the government instead has a long-term energy plan that makes it clear that they're blindly charging ahead no matter what the cost is going to be.

Does the Acting Premier even care? Is he even interested in how much this is going to cost Ontarians?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I answered this question yesterday, to her critic. She wants us to tell the public what it's going to cost for the first stage of refurbishment before we've entered into the procurement. We're going to tell all the bidders what our estimate of the cost is—that will totally destroy the competition on the price. It's totally irresponsible. The question is premised on an irresponsible idea to tell the world what the cost is going to be before the procurement. We won't do it that way.

1100

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Liberal power plan should be called the Liberal political power plan. When the Liberals realized that they could get a good deal on the Oakville plant but it would have to be in the news, or they could spend hundreds of millions more and get it done on the QT, what did they choose? They chose the expensive route that helped them politically. When the Premier wants to make splashy announcements to help their friends in private nuclear—who just happened to throw a \$100,000 fundraiser for them—all of a sudden, Ontario is plunging into a nuclear refurbishment without even knowing what the final price tag is going to be.

Will the Acting Premier admit that the long-term energy plan is in fact just a Liberal political power plan?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Refurbishment is going to generate 25,000 jobs, both from Bruce, which is a private company, and from OPG, which is a public company. We have a hybrid system, and it works extremely well.

But the reality is that the NDP want to create an energy superbureaucracy instead of encouraging competitive investment in the economy in Ontario. The fact is that Ontario has a hybrid system, a mix of both publicly owned generation and private investments, that drives our economy.

Does the leader of the third party know the job creation structure from refurbishment? No. As I asked you on the Thunder Bay question, do you have any evidence? You don't have any evidence and you don't have any research to back up your questions. Please come forward with a plan. Tell us what your plan is.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question is for my colleague the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, you have said over and over again that a major part of the job of the Ontario College of Trades is consumer protection. If that is so, can you explain to me why College of Trades enforcement cops would be investigating a complaint on who is responsible to unload pipe off a truck at a construction site?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I appreciate the question from the member opposite, and I also understand the fact that—look, he never supported the College of Trades when we brought it in, and I expect that it's going to be hard to convince him to support it now.

But every time an enforcement officer goes out there to ensure that our tradespeople's professions are being respected, preserved from that underground economy, we can't have this member coming at us every single time.

We know that you don't support the consumer protection that the College of Trades is bringing to ensure that consumers, when they hire somebody to do a job that requires skilled trades, know that that person is qualified.

We know that you don't support the skilled trades sector taking a self-governance approach and governing

themselves. For some reason, you don't think skilled tradespeople are as qualified as the other 44 regulatory bodies across the province. So we know where the member is coming from. We know that at every turn he's going to try to discredit the College of Trades.

They're doing a good job. They're out there doing the job they're supposed to be doing to ensure that we have a vibrant skilled trades sector—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Well, that was quite an answer.

So, Minister, I have a letter here from LIUNA Local 1089 to Bob Onyschuk, director of regulation enforcement, in which he explains that two Ontario College of Trades enforcement officials have nothing better to do than investigate a complaint by UA Local 663 about LIUNA on "whose job it is to unload pipe on the construction site." Is this for real? Are we kidding here?

Every day, another horror story comes to my office about the Ontario College of Trades. This nonsense does not protect the public or protect the trades in any way, shape or form. It is simply a waste of taxpayers' money, and the membership money is nothing but a bloody tax grab.

How long are you going to stand by and put up with this nonsense? It is out of control, and a moratorium should be placed on further action until after we abolish it, when you have the courage to call an election.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Sit down, please.

The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Brad Duguid: My question is, how long is the member going to rail against an organization that is cracking down on the underground economy? How long is the member going to rail against an organization that has reduced ratios between apprentices and journeymen by 14, when his government, when they were in power, did zero reductions in ratios? They're proving their worth, Mr. Speaker.

How long is this member going to rail against the fact that skilled trade workers in this sector have the right, the opportunity and the wisdom to govern themselves a heck of a lot better than that sector was governed when his party was in power? This party continues to attack organized labour. We see it in their right-to-work approach. They're going to reduce wages for everyday, ordinary skills people and all Ontarians, and union jobs.

We take a different approach. We're going to continue to rebuild our economy. We're continuing to support skilled trade workers and we'll continue to support unionized workers who are working really hard—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. New question.

CHRIS MAZZA

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre des Finances.

In December 2011, the Minister of Health asked the Ministry of Finance to conduct a forensic audit at Ornge. We know that this audit found serious financial irregularity and a significant discrepancy in terms of Dr. Mazza's reported and actual pay. The Minister of Health decided not to read the report. Did the Minister of Finance take the time to read the forensic audit of Ornge?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I applaud the Minister of Health for taking the initiative to order this forensic audit the moment she was aware of some of the discretions that were occurring. She immediately did so. She brought forward the forensic audit. Finance went in there, as well as some of the officials, to do the controls, and found some things. And that was sent to the OPP. Those initiatives are under way and we will certainly make every effort to provide as much information as possible to the OPP to enable them with that investigation to go forward. That is what has been taking place.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'll take it that means that he did not read the report. Yet he is responsible for managing the financial affairs of our province. The minister is also responsible for the sunshine list, and his ministry's audit found that Dr. Mazza's salary was actually three times higher than what was reported on the sunshine list. The serious financial irregularity at Ornge continues to astound us all and it casts a doubt on the integrity of all financial disclosures.

Can the minister tell us why, like the Minister of Health, he did not want to know just how much money Dr. Mazza was making, why he was not interested in learning from the financial wrongdoing of Ornge and why he is not interested in making sure that it never happens again?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, that's the furthest thing from the truth. The moment we found out what was happening at Ornge, the moment that agency went rogue, in effect, we went in and we clamped down. We took corrective action. The Minister of Health completely removed the board. We removed Dr. Mazza from his role and we provided proper oversight.

Subsequently to that, we've actually implemented greater measures of transparency and accountability and oversight on all agencies, and we'll continue to do that. We must make clear that the issue before us was unique, and his actions are the reason why the OPP and the police are investigating. We will continue to be as open and as transparent and provide the proper oversight on all the broader public sector to ensure these initiatives and these issues never happen again.

TUITION FEES

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. As a former University of Toronto Scarborough campus student and a proud representative of Scarborough-Guildwood, a riding that neighbours the UTSC campus, I know that flat tuition

fees are a huge issue for students. I've heard about this from many of my constituents.

I also know from personal experience, Speaker, that not every student takes a full course load. Many take fewer courses to account for a part-time job or other personal circumstances. Yet many students across the province taking as little as two thirds of a course load are currently charged the same tuition as a student taking a full course load. This is an issue that student leaders have been raising for some time and is an essential issue of fairness for our students and their families. We must do everything we can to make post-secondary education more accessible and affordable for them.

1110

Speaker, through you to the minister, what is the government doing about this ongoing issue of flat tuition fees?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for her question but, most of all, for her inspired choice of schools. I'm a UTSC grad myself.

I agree that fairness for students should be top priority for this government. I've often said, and we've often said, that we must see our post-secondary system through the eyes of our students. That's exactly why we announced today that we're moving forward with our commitment to tackle flat fees for undergraduate students.

This new policy will ensure that university students across the province taking less than an 80% course load will be charged on a per-credit basis. This will be fairer to students who, for whatever personal reason, choose to take less than 80% of a course load but are charged for that full course load.

At the same time, universities that adopted a flat-fee approach will need some time to adjust, because there's a revenue impact for them. So we're going to give them about three years to phase this in.

I want to thank the student leaders who are here today. I want to thank student leaders who have brought this issue to our attention. We're pleased to respond on their behalf.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you to the minister. It's important to hear that this government is taking the initiative to tackle flat-fee tuition billing in Ontario. This will make a difference in the lives of students in my riding and help make post-secondary education more affordable, making it possible for more young people to pursue post-secondary goals, like the students here from my riding and from West Hill Collegiate.

But, Speaker, flat fees are not the only issue facing our post-secondary students when they pay their tuition fees each year. Many students are relying on financial assistance, and they face fee deferrals or late charges when their tuition fees are due, prior to receiving their OSAP funding.

Speaker, this just isn't fair to those students receiving financial assistance. Students are being hit with late charges when they have no control on when their OSAP

is received. Can the minister outline any actions he plans to take to address this unfairness?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm pleased to report that we announced earlier today as well that we're removing this unnecessary burden to students across the province. In fact, we're making significant improvements to the process in which students pay for their tuition.

Our new policies will ensure that all students will be able to pay tuition in per-term installments, without paying deferral fees or interest charges. Tuition deposits will be capped and applied against tuition fees, not on top of fees owed. Students' tuition fees will not be due before the beginning of August, and students receiving financial aid—and this is one of the important pieces—will not be charged late fees and will not be expected to pay tuition until their OSAP assistance arrives.

Mr. Speaker, we've listened carefully to students, and, again, I want to acknowledge the voices that we've heard of our student leaders who are here today and across the province. We've heard their voices. We've continued to respond to their concerns, and we're very, very pleased and we should be proud of the input that they've had in public policy in this province.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Todd Smith: My question is for the energy minister this morning. The monthly hydro bill at Sigma Stretch Film in Belleville in January 2011—that's about two and a half years ago—was \$143,000. Today, the monthly hydro bill is \$325,000. It's a company that employs 123 people in my riding. By the time, Minister, your 42% rate increase kicks in, the monthly hydro bill at Sigma is going to be \$461,000 a month. That's an increase all thanks to the Liberal energy plan. Last month, your government gave Sigma a \$237,000 grant, which will cover about half a month's hydro bill by 2017.

Minister, the management at Sigma admits it's less expensive to do business in New Jersey than it is in Ontario. When is your government going to stop picking the pockets of Ontario businesses? Admit that you've screwed up our electricity system so badly that we can't recover—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. Sit down, please.

Minister.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to deal with some facts. Ontario's industrial rates compare favourably with other jurisdictions despite—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Member for Northumberland—Quinte West, you're warned.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli:—what the Progressive Conservatives claim. Industrial rates in northern Ontario are among the lowest in Canada and lower than 44 American states. Industrial rates in southern Ontario are lower than in Alberta, Michigan, New Jersey and California—you

mentioned New Jersey—and align with states like New York, Virginia and Tennessee.

Mr. Speaker—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, you're warned.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli:—as an example, for an industrial consumer with a demand of five megawatts per month, our 2010 LTEP, long-term energy plan, had projected that, in 2014, they will be paying \$109 per megawatt hour. Under this current plan, the industrial consumer will pay \$87 per megawatt hour in 2014. That is a significant reduction.

They don't know the facts. They don't know the file. They are spinning the public, and these are the true facts that—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli:—an independent third party, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: Minister, the Liberal wind turbines continue to spin, but nobody in Ontario is buying that Liberal spin. Nobody in Ontario is buying that.

Last week, you climbed up on your high horse and told the Ontario people that it was their responsibility to understand why your government has turned the lowest hydro rates in North America into the highest in all of North America. For months, Hydro One—and I've written you a letter on this—has been forcing Upper Canada Minerals—that's an employer of almost 30 people in the Madoc and Bancroft area in centre and northern Hastings—to use what they call “dirty” power, made up of your intermittent power sources, your wind and solar. It's causing fluctuations in their power rates, and it's doing damage to their very expensive equipment and slowing down productivity. The problems occurring at Upper Canada Minerals show that your rhetoric about improving the hydro grid is nothing but a Liberal illusion.

Minister, after driving up rates and now having problems with the grid, when are you going to finally admit that you failed? Why don't you stand up today and resign?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. Stop the clock.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakubuski: Todd's offering you some good advice over there.

Hon. James J. Bradley: We need Konrad Yakubuski in here.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of the Environment and the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, come to order. When I stand, you're supposed to stay quiet.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The members from Northumberland–Quinte West and Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, maybe because of the noise you haven’t heard me. You’ve both been warned.

Minister.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I really want to refer this to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you, and I appreciate the referral.

Mr. Speaker, I can’t believe what I’m hearing from the member from Prince Edward–Hastings. He knows that, last month, I had the proud opportunity to visit Sigma Stretch Film announcing a new investment from the Eastern Ontario Development Fund—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Minister of Rural Affairs, come to order.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: —he was there at the company with me for the announcement. In fact, it wasn’t the first investment, it was the second investment that this government has made.

I can tell you that among manufacturers in the province that I’ve visited, this is one of the most successful, promising companies. He doesn’t have to take my word for it. He simply needs to talk to the company—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Prince Edward–Hastings, you asked the question.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: —in just about 10 years, they’ve gone from a company of eight employees up to now, I think, they’re at about 120—

Interjections.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: They’re doing fantastic. The export market is growing. It’s a beautiful example of advanced manufacturing.

I don’t know where he gets his information, but he’s definitely not talking to the same company that I visited just a few weeks ago.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Sit down, please.

New question. The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister for Rural Affairs, I’ve asked you to come to order more than once.

Member for Timmins–James Bay.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Across northern Ontario, people are hopping mad in regard to what they’re going to see their hydro bills increase by with the announcement you made on

Monday in your long-term energy plan. It is not good news for citizens to hear that their hydro rates over the next three years are going to go up by 33%, and we’re getting a lot of response.

I’ve got this particular person, Andrea Heward from North Bay, who writes, “I am a homeowner, I work full-time, and I am disabled.... Electricity is very important in my day-to-day living.... I have an electric wheelchair that has to be plugged in on a daily and nightly basis ... so I can go to work the next day without having to worry about the battery. I am paying \$3,600 a year in hydro minimum, I only make \$32,000 per year, which means I am paying more than 10% of my annual household income in hydro.”

1120

She can’t afford to pay her hydro bill, Minister, and you’re raising the rates. How do you see that as being fair to Mrs. Heward in North Bay?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: As I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, we have made very significant investments in the system in order that it be reliable and it be clean, and that put pressure on rates.

As a result of that pressure, we took some transitional steps. That includes the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit, which takes 10% off the bottom line on the bills. The Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit saves qualifying individuals up to \$963 per year—it probably applies to that person—with a maximum of \$1,097 per year for qualifying seniors. The Northern Ontario Energy Credit saves families up to \$210 per year and individuals up to \$137 per year. In addition, we have the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program and the saveONenergy Home Assistance Program.

These are cumulative, Mr. Speaker. That particular electricity consumer can access all of these programs, and I assume most of them will apply to her.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, I think this consumer knows very well how to apply, and that’s including that she’s having to pay her hydro bill.

I have another email here from Donald Bates from Thunder Bay, who says, “I have been living at my current address in Thunder Bay, Ontario for the past 10 years. I have over the past 10 years purchased new appliances all” of which are “energy-efficient and have installed ... energy-efficient lights. Each year, my energy consumption has been” going down.

However, for years now, he has been preached to by government to conserve, “yet the more I conserve, the more I” pay.

So I say to you again, Minister, people across the north are hopping mad that no matter what they do, no matter how they try to prepare themselves, no matter how much they try to conserve, their hydro rates have gone up, and now they’re going to go up another 33%. How do you square that off as being fair for people who need hydro on a day-to-day basis for their life?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Speaker, the announcement of the long-term energy plan several days ago provided the

opportunity for a lot of people to express their opinions on the plan. One of the questions that was asked of both the leader of the third party and the Leader of the Opposition was, "Could you promise to lower electricity rates?" The answer from both of them was, "No." So I'd like to know what the plan is. Mr. Speaker, they have no plan.

The reality is that when you compare the rates for a 20-year period that have been revealed by the National Energy Board, Alberta's 20-year projection is 3.7%; British Columbia, 3%. That's 60% over the 20 years, Mr. Speaker. Ontario's, under this long-term energy plan, over 20 years, is a 2.8% average increase. That's an improvement over our plans in 2010. It's progress. Plus, we have all those other support programs for members of the public.

EDUCATION

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Ma question est pour la ministre de l'Éducation, l'honorable Liz Sandals.

For those of us who value quality, publicly funded education, including so many of Ontario's teachers who are here with us today, it was reassuring to witness earlier this week the passage of Bill 122, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, which passed second reading after 14 hours of debate.

As one of the earliest educational philosophers, Plato, said rather a long time ago, one of the measures of a society is the care it devotes to its youth. In that spirit, the Wynne government has worked tirelessly and perseveringly to rebuild our commitment and relationships with our partners in the education communities. We all aspire to move forward with a common purpose to improve student achievement and ultimately build a more prosperous and just society.

Can the minister please inform this chamber: What are the next steps for moving this important piece of legislation through the parliamentary process?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the member from Etobicoke North for raising this important question. I, too, was extremely pleased to have Bill 122, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, pass second reading this week.

This is an important step forward in how we work with our partners in education, some of whom are joining us here today. I know that many of my colleague MPPs will be meeting with representatives from the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation today to talk about how we can all work together to build on the progress we have made in student achievement over the past 10 years.

Part of this is ensuring that we provide the education sector with a clear process, with defined roles for the parties as we approach the next round of collective bargaining. The next step is to send Bill 122 to committee for public hearings and clause-by-clause examination and then hopefully back to the Legislature for third reading. I look forward to support from members so that we can get this important new collective bargaining scheme in place.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: First of all, on behalf of all the students and parents of my own riding of Etobicoke North, I'd like to commend the minister for her stewardship of this important file.

In face-to-face meetings today, we'll hear from our partners in education communities not only about Bill 122, but, of course, other ideas, measures and initiatives to strengthen education in Ontario. Our government remains focused, as the minister has declared repeatedly, on student achievement.

Ontario is already recognized around the world as having one of the best publicly funded education systems in the English-speaking world. Yet, as always, there is more work to be done. We continue to strive for the best for our students.

Speaker, would the minister please inform this chamber, what are the next measures she will adopt to further fortify education in Ontario?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Today is an excellent opportunity to hear directly from our partners at OSSTF about their vision for the future of our education system here in Ontario. I've had the pleasure over these last few months of travelling all around the province to hear directly from Ontarians about what they think the future of education looks like to them.

Education workers from all over the province have been part of that and have been very active participants in the consultations. They've been there in person. They've provided digital and written feedback. What we've heard is that we need to broaden our approach, our understanding of what student success means, and we need to provide engaging learning opportunities that develop the skills needed to actively contribute to the 21st century economy and society.

We look forward to releasing this new vision earlier in the new year, but as the member said, we have a lot to be proud of in creating with our partners a great education system. Now we need the opportunity to make it an excellent system.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is for the Acting Premier. The Liberal government made a short-sighted decision to close the slots at the Fort Erie Race Track. Of course, we know this decision was enabled by the NDP when they abstained from the vote on the 2012 budget.

The Fort Erie Race Track has put together a festival plan, like the government's transition panel told them to. The festival will celebrate the Chinese New Year, the Year of the Horse. They submitted their plan to the Premier, the OLG and the media last week.

Minister, this proposal is time-sensitive. If you don't want to answer them, will you tell us today what your plan is?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I appreciate the question from the member from Perth-Wellington. Of course, as you know,

our government put together a five-year plan in place, \$400 million under the direction of three former very distinguished cabinet ministers in the province of Ontario: the honourable John Snobelen, the honourable Elmer Buchanan and honourable John Wilkinson. We depended on their good guidance.

I fear for the opposition. There's the five-point plan, the three-point plan and their half-baked plan, but we have a five-year plan of \$400 million.

Mr. Speaker, let me tell you what we're doing for Fort Erie. I'm encouraged that Fort Erie is continuing discussions to develop a festival-type race meet. Assistance is available to track operators to develop plans that include new ideas, new partnerships and new sources of revenue. I understand that the Fort Erie Live Racing Consortium has indicated that they will be applying for funding assistance from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food to hire an outside consultant to help them develop a solid race plan.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Obviously, nothing is the answer; that's the answer.

Minister, your plan for horse racing has destroyed this proud industry. It hurt families at a time when they can least afford it. They're short on time. They need an answer by the second week of January, to coincide with the Chinese New Year.

1130

We have a plan to save the horse racing industry, including the Fort Erie Race Track. It's a plan that will strengthen partnerships and create jobs rather than destroy communities. Minister, what action will you take to save the Fort Erie Race Track?

Hon. Jeff Leal: To paraphrase a former Prime Minister of Canada, "Don Drummond if necessary, but not necessarily Don Drummond." So when you look at the Drummond report, the Drummond report said the SARP program was not accountable, not transparent and poor public policy. Mr. Speaker, don't take my word for it; take the word of a former colleague of theirs, the honourable John Snobelen, who said the SARP program wasn't accountable, not transparent, poor public policy and needed to be replaced. We've replaced that with a five-year, \$400-million program, and I take no lessons from the opposition with their half-baked plan.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. This government has left the horse racing industry in Fort Erie in critical condition. It left it with only one option to stay alive after it cancelled its main revenue source through the Slots at Racetracks Program cancellation. That option was to come up with a plan for a seasonal festival. Well, the Fort Erie Race Track has actually submitted a detailed Year of the Horse Festival plan to the government. They need to know by the end of the year, however, if they're going to get funding so that

they can actually go ahead with the planning of this festival. My question is a simple one, Speaker: When will the government respond to this proposal?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Acting Premier.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The Minister of Rural Affairs, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I'm so excited to answer that question that I got up a little early, before my colleague the Minister of Finance.

As I just responded to the member from Perth-Wellington, we are in the process right now. We're encouraging the wonderful people of Fort Erie, in their discussions, to develop a festival-type race meet. Assistance is available to track operators to develop plans that include new ideas, new partnerships and new sources of revenue. I understand that the Fort Erie Live Racing Consortium has indicated that it will be applying for funding assistance from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food to hire an outside consultant to help them develop a solid plan.

But I want to know from the third party, why did they stall the appointment of the honourable Elmer Buchanan, a former very distinguished agriculture minister from 1990 to 1995, a great advocate, a member of the NDP with great distinction? When they got his appointment in front of committee, they turned him down, threw him under the bus, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, my question is not about well-connected insiders; it's about the people of Fort Erie and their specialty track meet. Supporting the Fort Erie Race Track's Year of the Horse Festival plan is the bare minimum first step to keep this racetrack open in the short term.

For the long-term viability of the racetrack's future is in fact the Slots at Racetracks Program being reinstated. Obviously, that's something that they're not interested in doing. But the Fort Erie track urgently needs an answer on this proposal. The Year of the Horse in the Chinese calendar starts in late January, with the Chinese New Year. Will this government announce its support for this proposal by the end of this month so that they can actually get to planning the Year of the Horse Festival meet at the Fort Erie Race Track?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I find it rather unusual that anybody in the third party will insult a former distinguished member of this Parliament, the honourable Elmer Buchanan, a gentleman who was considered one of the finest agriculture ministers in the province of Ontario. When they had the opportunity, they threw him under the bus. Shame, shame, shame.

But let me tell you what we're doing for Fort Erie. We're working with Fort Erie Live Racing Consortium. We have asked them to submit a plan. We were providing them with financial support to get that plan in.

And, you know, when you talk about contradictions with the NDP, why did they accept \$18,500 from Bruce Power at one of their fundraising events?

PARALEGALS

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Attorney General.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock.

The member from Ottawa—Orléans.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you, Speaker. Mr. Speaker, through you to the Attorney General, I know that our government's decision in 2003 to regulate paralegals has been extremely successful. I'm pleased to know that nearly 5,000 paralegals are licensed and insured in Ontario, providing consumers throughout the province with more choice and improved access to justice.

I know that Ontario is the only jurisdiction in Canada that regulates paralegals. Mr. Speaker, could the Attorney General please tell this House about the changes to the regulation of the paralegal industry, specifically the amendments to the rules of the Small Claims Court?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, I'd like to congratulate the member for his advocacy on behalf of paralegals in Ontario. He's quite correct that our government's commitment to strengthen the paralegal profession has been ongoing since 2003. As a matter of fact, as he mentioned, there are 5,000 paralegals in the province now; when the program first started in 2003, there were only 2,200.

The reason for that is that people need legal representation before administrative tribunals and before those bodies that paralegals can appear in front of. That's why it's so important to pass the new law that we're bringing forward, in a bill that's currently before the House, that would amend the Law Society Act to increase the number of licensed paralegals on the board of governors of the law society—namely convocation—from two to five, to get greater representation.

It would also amend the Solicitors Act to confirm that licensed paralegals can represent a person in a legal proceeding and receive payment for these services. I'll continue with this in my supplementary.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I thank the Attorney General for that answer. I'm happy to hear of our government's commitment to improving access to justice through the good work of paralegals. I know these changes have taken place through extensive consultations, but are also a demonstration of our government taking action on recommendations that have been made and set out by the Law Society of Upper Canada.

In addition to the great work that has been done with amending rules of the Small Claims Court, could the Attorney General please comment on the work that has been done by our government to recognize the importance of paralegals in the court system?

Hon. John Gerretsen: The rule changes that are taking place within the Small Claims Court make it easier and more convenient for people to submit claims, as well

as defenses to claims that may have been issued against them. It's an online service that's available to everyone, including, obviously, paralegals.

But what is truly, truly important is that this bill gets passed by December 31 of this year, which is less than a month away right now. The reason for that is that there's an election cycle for both benchers and paralegal benchers that will take place in March of next year. That election cycle only takes place every four years, and if we don't take the opportunity—and I know all members in the House agree on this bill, so why don't we get on with it and pass the bill, so that the elections can take place and the paralegals will not have to wait another four years before their representation will increase from two to five.

The people of Ontario have a right to proper legal representation, whether it's through paralegals or through lawyers. Access to justice is the main issue facing the justice system today.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the deputy minister. Minister, Esbriet is a medication used for the treatment of mild to moderate forms of idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, referred to as IPF. It was approved by the Ministry of Health in Ottawa in 2012 based on scientific evidence, and yet these studies concluded that 30,000 Canadian citizens are suffering with IPF.

The Canadian Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation estimates that 5,000 patients in Ontario or in Canada will die this year, patients like Bryon Miles from Northumberland, Barb Skinner from Wellington—Halton Hills, Virginia Koury from my riding of Durham and Hugh Detzler from Huron—Bruce. Your government and the Ministry of Health have let these families down and left them suffering with IPF.

Minister, governments in Europe and the UK publicly fund access to Esbriet to improve their lives. The EAP process is not working. Will you help or look into relieving the patients who are suffering with IPF in Ontario?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): You said that you asked the question of the deputy minister. I want to make sure it's the Deputy Premier.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Deputy?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Yes, I think we understood, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Acting.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I recognize that Ontarians want to have access to new and effective drug therapies as quickly as possible. Our Ontario drug program offers, as you may know, more than 3,800 drugs now. New drugs approved for use by Health Canada are first reviewed by the Canadian Drug Expert Committee.

With regard to Esbriet, the Canadian Drug Expert Committee recommended that Esbriet should not be funded because of inconsistent results. It is then up to

each province to decide whether they want to fund the drug, as the member is now asking.

We've established a process for approving drugs: an expert advisory committee that makes a recommendation based on the best available evidence.

All brand name drugs that come forward for review are now also considered through the Pan-Canadian Pricing Alliance. Given the concerns raised by the Canadian Drug Expert Committee, participating provinces and territories have decided not to engage in negotiations through the pan-Canadian process at this time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. John O'Toole: I don't thank you for the answer because I don't think you're actually listening. These are families that are suffering with IPF and you're not listening. Your EAP process does not work.

A medical specialist in Toronto, Dr. Binnie, strongly states that Esbriet should be publicly funded in Ontario, as it is in other jurisdictions.

Why are you denying the patients in Ontario access to a drug that is strongly recommended by experts? Your process is nothing but a block to access to health care in Ontario, and I'm asking you today to look at those studies and fund this for the people of Ontario.

Hon. Charles Sousa: It's critical to appreciate the concerns that we all, in this House, share for families and those who are suffering. It is why we want to make sure that the proper drugs are being administered and are being approved by the experts who are providing it.

Mr. Speaker, to the member's question, I am told that the Ministry of Health is gladly and appropriately reviewing any new evidence that's available to manufacturing this said drug for submission. So we are taking the actions and the proper steps necessary to protect those families and ensure that everyone receives the proper care at the right time.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the minister responsible for women's issues. Every six days, a woman in Canada is murdered by her current or former partner. Ontario shelters like Cornerstone are turning away more and more women and children every year because of a lack of funding. In the first five months of this year alone at Cornerstone, a record number of 72 abused women have been turned away, to potentially lethal results.

My question also is about Toronto's victim services, the only agency that provides immediate assistance to domestic violence victims. Their funding per victim has dropped from \$286 in 1990 to \$31 in 2010.

Today, in acknowledging the 24th anniversary of the Montreal massacre, this government will voice its concern, but how many more women have to die before this government acts?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: I know that the member opposite brings up a very important issue and one that's important to all of us in this House, not only to myself, as

the minister, but to our government as well. I will be rising later this afternoon in recognition of December 6, the national day of remembrance, where we remember that day and what it means to us.

We know that domestic violence is a serious issue, and we've done quite a bit on this side of the House over the last number of years. We introduced the Domestic Violence Action Plan. We've trained more than 28,000 front-line workers, and in fact, there are thousands who go through our shelter system every year. Do we need to do more? I think we can all agree, Speaker, that we do. This is a very critical issue, one that we all think is a priority and one that we will continue to work on.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. The time for question period has expired. There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1144 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I had the pleasure today of meeting with some local teachers and administrative folks from my riding, and today I'd like to welcome them—they're on their way in: Jeff Denys from Central Huron, Mary Jane Karkheck, Bonnie Cameron of the Bluewater board, and Krista McCormack from Flesher-ton.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I have the pleasure of introducing the Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association of Ontario. I don't know if that's the gentleman up there or not.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm guessing, based on who else is in the chamber, that, yes, it is.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Sorry?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Just introduce them. They'll show up.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Thank you—Denise Magi, the vice-president; Keith Deviney, president; and other MEAO board of director members.

We also have, from a different association, Adrianna Tetley and Leah Stephenson from the Association of Ontario Health Centres. I will speak to both of them in short order.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MYALGIC ENCEPHALOMYELITIS

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm very pleased to rise today to recognize the Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association of Ontario—MEAO for short—on their Community Engagement Day.

There are approximately 570,000 people in Ontario living with a chronic complex environmentally linked illness. One of these illnesses is myalgic encephalomyelitis, or chronic fatigue syndrome. Other conditions include fibromyalgia, environmental sensitivities and multiple chemical sensitivities.

The MEAO is with us today at Queen's Park to release the findings of a new study involving integrated care for Ontarians suffering from environmentally linked conditions.

I would like to congratulate the Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association of Ontario for hosting this Community Engagement Day and for educating us as MPPs on environmentally linked illnesses.

I'd also like to thank the association for being a comprehensive place of information, support, awareness and education for Ontarians living with myalgic encephalomyelitis and associated illnesses.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Good afternoon. I have two short statements to make. First, let me tell you about a friend of mine in my riding of Windsor-Tecumseh. Al Nelman just turned 89. He's a race walker. In 2011, in Utah, he was the only 5K race walker in the 85-to-89 age group. He finished the race in 43 minutes and 31 seconds. Last year, he went back and bested his previous record, winning gold with a time of 42:23. Earlier this year, at the young age of 88, he and three others were invited to the USA National Senior Games. He won with a time of 41:52. Then he went back to Utah, where he won gold again with 42:33.

Al Nelman is a World War II veteran, and I'm very proud have him as a friend.

Now, Speaker, turning the page: A new study was released today by the Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association of Ontario. The acronym goes MEAO, I understand.

We in the NDP are always interested in new and effective ways to keep people healthy and in building a more sustainable health care system.

I join my caucus health critic, France Gélinas, in recognizing that, over the past 10 years, there have been dramatic increases in environmental illnesses. They now rank third among chronic diseases. Unfortunately, the current health care system often fails to recognize these chronic diseases and does not provide the supports that people need. There are 570,000 people in Ontario who live with chronic, complex, environmentally linked illnesses, and we will be very interested as the new study suggests ways to improve care and support for people living with environmentally linked illnesses.

MYALGIC ENCEPHALOMYELITIS

Mr. Joe Dickson: Two of my colleagues are addressing the same issue, so I guess we've got it covered by all parties here. That's appropriate, because it's a very significant issue.

I'm pleased to again sponsor the Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association of Ontario, which is a registered Ontario charity. MEAO is a support organization offering information, support, awareness and education for people living with myalgic encephalomyelitis, sometimes known

as chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia and environmental sensitivities or multiple chemical sensitivities. So it's very, very broad. We have over some 550,000 Ontarians living with ME, FM and MCS, which are three chronic, complex, environmentally linked illnesses.

MEAO has partnered with the Association of Ontario Health Centres, AOHCC, and that is significant. They have developed a new proposal for an Ontario centre of excellence in environmental health, and they have also produced a patients' study, which has already been mentioned by my colleagues. It is entitled Recognition, Inclusion and Equity—The Time Is Now. The study's objectives are to see, in the very near future, a vastly improved system of health care.

I should mention, Mr. Speaker, that members are welcome to go down to the dining room at 4 o'clock. They're there for several hours; we all need to see them.

AGGREGATE RECYCLING

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Today I rise with regret because of the terrible waste that happened this morning here at the Legislature. Ironically, this waste occurred at the expense of increasing recycling in Ontario.

You see, this past Monday, the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs decided not to consider Bill 56, the Aggregate Recycling Promotion Act. When the PC committee members put forward a motion to consider the bill, the Liberals and the NDP teamed up to defeat the motion and opt to do nothing instead—absolutely nothing.

We could have had public hearings on Bill 56 this morning and clause-by-clause consideration next week. Instead, what has happened is that the NDP and the Liberals decided to shelve Bill 56 this past Monday. Instead, the committee chose to do absolutely nothing this morning or next week. I must admit I was somewhat shocked by the news.

Bill 56 received unanimous support here in this chamber and was a recommendation in the final ARA review. Moreover, it received widespread support outside of this chamber, where many businesses, municipalities and residents have called for the bill's adoption.

So I stand today to ask my colleagues in the NDP and the Liberal government to please put aside the politics and ask your respective members in the committee to take up Bill 56 for consideration. Let's get it done. Let's get this bill passed. Let's promote aggregate recycling in Ontario.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm honoured to rise today to shed light on the ongoing and emerging crisis of violence against women and the corresponding need for shelter and support.

Tomorrow is December 6, the 24th anniversary of the massacre in Montreal. Women and men across this country will remember and mourn the loss of 14 women

that day. We will mourn their loss, and we will remember that there is much work to be done to end violence against women. We should also wonder why it is taking so long to find solutions and why such apathy exists around the issue of gender-based violence. It is insidious.

This province needs a plan for affordable and safe housing, especially for women who are seeking refuge, the most significant being housing. With no place to go, women who are trying to escape a violent home or violence on the streets are forced into dangerous situations, as are their children. They feel trapped.

Families have also fallen victim to the lack of affordable housing. We all know that municipalities are not able to sustain a housing strategy in isolation. They need the province and the federal government to come to the table. In Waterloo region, we're fortunate to have Mary's Place. In 2012, they were at 151% average occupancy; in 2013, 152%. The average age of children who are in that shelter is seven years of age. Lack of housing, financial crisis, and family and relationship breakdown were the three main reasons that their need was so strong.

1310

Waterloo region is a caring and compassionate community which has rallied behind housing, but they can't do it alone. We need a provincial strategy around housing so that women have a safe place to go, and their children need to be supported throughout this process as well.

PEEL HIV/AIDS NETWORK

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: This past weekend, I had the opportunity to attend a World AIDS Day celebration hosted by the Peel HIV/Aids Network, known as PHAN, in my beautiful riding of Mississauga-Brampton South. Over the past two decades, this worthy organization has been serving those affected by HIV through their support, education, advocacy and volunteerism.

World AIDS Day was an occasion to spread awareness about HIV, to reflect on the progress made in finding a cure for this deadly disease, and to affirm our community's commitment by showing our support for those living with HIV and commemorating those we have lost.

Our government provides funding for more than 90 programs and services across the province that deliver HIV prevention, education and support to those affected by HIV and to those who are at risk.

On behalf of the residents of Mississauga-Brampton South, I would like to congratulate PHAN on their 20th anniversary and for their excellent community service.

HOCKEY TOURNAMENT

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It gives me great pleasure to rise this afternoon. I'd like to say that this past weekend, the Cobourg Community Hockey League hosted the Cobourg Silver Stick tournament. They sent three divisional rep teams to the tournament. In the regional qualifier that was held, the champions of that tournament were invited

to participate in the international Silver Stick finals against other regional champions across Ontario and the United States. I was at the puck-dropping ceremony Friday evening. I'd like to thank Peter Lorenz and Gary Oliver, the organizers of that tournament.

To the point, Mr. Speaker: The peewee hockey team, coached by Mark Diminie, won the Silver Stick tournament and will be representing Cobourg in the international tournament coming up.

They also advanced this group to their third straight international final. Two seasons ago, this team won the Newmarket international final for the atom team, and last year, the major atom team made it to the championship game against Oakville at the Sarnia international tournament.

I'd like to thank and congratulate coach Mark Diminie and the players on a game well done.

EDUCATION WORKERS

Ms. Soo Wong: Children in Ontario and their families know that education is a foundation for the future. The key to a good education is strong teachers and support staff in our schools.

Education workers are on the front line every day, and, through their dedication, we know that our students are given the best opportunities to learn and to succeed. Our classrooms are safe and innovative, and they provide students with the support and opportunities they need to learn and to grow.

I'm pleased to recognize and welcome the many educators who are visiting Queen's Park today. I know that many of my colleagues attended their breakfast event this morning, and today, throughout the day, OSSTF representatives are meeting with their local MPPs.

It is important that we continue to build on our relationship with our education partners and Ontarians so that we can take our education system from great to excellent.

Ontario is recognized as having some of the best public schools in the English-speaking world. Since 2003, our government has made major investments in our education system by making sure classroom sizes are smaller and test scores are improving. We support our students with special needs, there are fewer students dropping out from our high schools, and more students are entering post-secondary education than ever before.

These accomplishments are only made possible through our relationship with our education partners. Mr. Speaker, I again want to welcome our education partners who are here at Queen's Park today and thank each one of them for what they do to support and nurture our students across Ontario.

TRACEY McDONAGH SIMPSON

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to stand today to recognize a very special person I consider a friend, from the Lucknow area: Tracey McDonagh Simpson. On

November 16, the Lucknow Kinsmen and Kinettes joined together to have a wonderful 40th-anniversary celebration where, together, they donated \$42,000 to multiple sclerosis. Over and above that, they took a moment to recognize, pay tribute and even roast this person, Tracey McDonagh, whose contribution to the community and dedication as a volunteer is to be admired. It sets a benchmark for all of us. She always has a ready smile and a willingness to roll up her sleeves to get the job done, no matter what it is.

Tracey was bestowed a lifetime Kinette membership that evening in recognition of her efforts and ability to engage people to get involved and, ultimately, become a Kinette member. The members that she attracted to this rural organization are just amazing. She has a contagious enthusiasm that clearly cannot be missed when you meet her.

When Tracey was asked why, in front of her husband, her kids, her children, and her community—Tracey is a person who is never lost for words, and she actually got choked up a little bit, but her words were heartfelt when she said, “I just love my community.” Those words echoed through the hall, and I have to tell you that the community loves Tracey—except for her oatmeal muffins, but that’s a story for another day.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HEALTH STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT (HEALTHY DECISIONS MADE EASY), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT DES LOIS RELATIVES À LA SANTÉ (DÉCISIONS SANTÉ SIMPLIFIÉES)

M^{me} Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 149, An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act and the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to improve the health of Ontarians / Projet de loi 149, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection et la promotion de la santé et la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée en vue d’améliorer la santé des Ontariens et des Ontariennes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Shall the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): A short statement from the member.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. This is a pretty simple bill. What I did is, I took the calorie labelling bill where, when you go to McDonald’s you see a Big Mac, 499 or 450 calories, and I took the smoke-free amendment act, which bans flavoured tobacco, and put them both together in a bill that I call Healthy Decisions Made Easy.

It is a bill that is aimed towards health promotion, and what it does is it puts two big pillars of health promotion together, the first one having to do with quitting smoking and the second one having to do with nutrition. Those are

two of the pillars of health promotion that have been put into this easy little bill.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. John Milloy: I move that, pursuant to standing order 6(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. tonight, Thursday, December 5, 2013.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Milloy has moved government notice of motion number 30. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a bunch of noes.

All those in favour, please say “aye.”

All those opposed, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. It will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1319 to 1324.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Milloy has moved government notice of motion number 30. All those in favour, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bradley, James J.
Chan, Michael
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
Duguid, Brad

Hunter, Miltzie
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
McMeekin, Ted
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John

Moridi, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Piruzza, Teresa
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Souza, Charles
Wong, Soo

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Bisson, Gilles
Chudleigh, Ted
DiNovo, Cheri
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Fife, Catherine
Forster, Cindy
Gélinas, France
Hardeman, Ernie
Hatfield, Percy
Holaday, Douglas C.

Horwath, Andrea
Jones, Sylvia
Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
Marchese, Rosario
McDonell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
Miller, Paul
Milligan, Rob E.
Munro, Julia
Nicholls, Rick
O’Toole, John

Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pettapiece, Randy
Prue, Michael
Schein, Jonah
Singh, Jagmeet
Smith, Todd
Tabuns, Peter
Taylor, Monique
Thompson, Lisa M.
Vanthof, John
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 28; the nays are 39.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

VISITOR

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order: the member from Nepean—Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I know I missed introduction of guests, but I wanted to introduce a lovely young lady, seven years old. Her name is Trudy Flashford. She's here today with her mother, Sharon. This is the first time she's ever been in the Legislature.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Simcoe—Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding Bill 133, An Act to amend the Ontario Provincial Police Collective Bargaining Act; Bill 71, An Act to protect child performers in the live entertainment industry and the recorded entertainment industry; and Bill 99, An Act to proclaim Terry Fox Day.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Simcoe—Grey seeks unanimous consent to move a motion.

Agreed? I think I heard a no.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE AND ACTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Mr. Speaker, 24 years ago tomorrow marks a dark day in Canadian history. On December 6, 1989, a gunman walked into École Polytechnique de Montréal and killed 14 female engineering students.

I remember the shock that followed the day of that news. I can't imagine losing a family member to such senseless violence. My thoughts and prayers go out to all the families that have been impacted.

1330

The Montreal massacre was not an attack against students or engineers. It was an attack against women, and it has become a defining moment for action on violence against women. The National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women serves as both a moving recognition of the women lost to gender-based violence and a rallying cry for further work to end this violence.

In November, women across the province called for an end to violence as part of Woman Abuse Prevention Month. Violence against women shatters many lives and has no place in Ontario.

Today, we recognize all women killed by male violence and recommit ourselves to take action to prevent violence against girls and women. It's a stark reminder of one terrible fact: Women are at risk of violence because they're women. This violence is manifested through many forms. Whether it's the sexual exploitation of women and girls, the assault and control of women by their partners or the high number of missing and murdered aboriginal women across Canada, gender inequality in all its forms is at the root of violence against girls and women.

In the ongoing effort to end this violence, I'm happy to say that some progress has been made since December 6, 1989. Our collective response to this issue is improving. Our province has a strong network of supports and services, including women's shelters, counselling services and partner assault programs, and I want to thank all the staff and volunteers who make a difference in the lives of women and children every day. Thanks to our partners in the community, the women and men engaged in ending violence against women, we are making a difference.

Working with the Ministry of Community and Social Services, we've almost doubled our funding for community support services for victims of domestic abuse. This funding helped serve close to 12,000 women and 8,000 children in emergency shelters last year.

I recently reaffirmed our investment in employment training to help abused women get the support they need to rebuild their lives. We started this program because we know employment training helps create a better future toward economic security. Close to 2,000 women have learned relevant and practical skills that are needed to succeed in today's fast-changing labour market through this program. So even on a day filled with mourning and sadness, we should feel proud of the work we have done.

But this task is by no means complete. As a mother, an advocate, a friend and as minister responsible for women's issues, I have met too many women who have suffered from abuse. I'm always motivated by their determination to rebuild their lives and keep their children safe. The tragedy of December 6 reminds us that we must not let our vigilance wane. We must continue to educate boys and girls and men and women about healthy, equal relationships. We must continue to change attitudes and behaviour so that violence against women and girls doesn't begin in the first place.

Earlier today, we received unanimous consent to wear these buttons to remember women whose lives have been cut short by violence and to recommit ourselves to taking action on violence against women and girls in all its egregious forms.

I'd like us to take a moment to remember and acknowledge the 14 lives lived and tragically lost 24 years ago: Geneviève Bergeron, age 21; Hélène Colgan, age 23; Nathalie Croteau, age 23; Barbara Daigneault, age 22; Anne-Marie Edward, age 21; Maud Haviernick, age 29; Barbara Klucznik Widajewicz, age 31; Maryse Laganière, age 25; Maryse Leclair, age 23; Anne-Marie Lemay, age 27; Sonia Pelletier, age 23; Michèle Richard, age 21; Annie St-Arneault, age 23; and Annie Turcotte, age 21.

Let us all ensure that these young women will remain forever in our memory and in our hearts. December 6 is a day we must not forget, but it's also a day that should provide everyone here with the inspiration, determination and renewed commitment to end violence against women whenever and wherever it occurs.

If I may, Mr. Speaker, I'd ask that we take a moment of silence for these women and all others that have been affected by violence.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll do that after the responses.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Afterwards? Okay. And then end the silence with a commitment to work for change together.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: It is my honour to stand on behalf of our leader, Tim Hudak, and the Progressive Conservative Party today to speak on the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

Exactly 24 years ago tomorrow, on December 6, 1989, 14 young women were killed at École Polytechnique in Montreal. These smart young women were engineering students. They were full of promise, preparing for interesting, challenging careers. Like previous generations of women, they were poised to make a difference in what had previously been a male-dominant profession. Tragically, these 14 young women were killed because they were women.

What has come to be called the Montreal Massacre is the event we are all called upon to remember today. December 6 is again to be commemorated as the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. It is an occasion to remember the women murdered, and it is important for all of us to recommit to ensuring that their deaths were not in vain.

As we mourn the loss of the students at École Polytechnique, it is important for us to be mindful that many women and girls have been murdered or abused since then. We know that the majority of men do not use or condone violence, but most of the violence in Canada is committed by men. Statistics Canada reports that women are three times more likely than men to be killed, sexually assaulted or threatened with a weapon by a male partner.

Violence against women continues to be part of our present. We need to continue to work for an end to violence against women and girls as part of our commitment to women's equality.

The White Ribbon Campaign is a movement to promote the involvement of men and boys in violence prevention on various fronts. The White Ribbon Campaign pledge is a Canadian example of individual men making a signed commitment not to commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women and girls. I'm proud to say that hundreds of thousands of men have participated in making this commitment over the years.

Emerging research has demonstrated that there are specific gateways to prevention that have shown promise in fostering healthy and respectful relationships. According to this research, men's emotional well-being is improved when they spend more time caring for their children. Greater involvement in fathering is associated with reduced family conflict and violence, and increases the chance that children will grow up in a safe environment.

Canada is at the forefront of advanced parental leave policies that include both mothers and fathers. In 2006, only 20% of fathers applied for and received paid

parental leave benefits, but uptake is slowly rising. In 2010, the number increased to 30%.

Another gateway is through peer modelling and support designed to change cultural norms that perpetuate violence. Numerous educators emphasize the importance of working together in an all-male group to understand the impact of men's socialization and their understanding of masculinity in order to stop the violence.

School-based initiatives are a focal point for work in this area. These include the promotion of safe environments free of sexual harassment, sexual assault, homophobia, and other forms of bullying and violence. An important objective is to create environments where traditional views of masculine behaviour, such as strength, can be re-envisioned by young men to include social responsibility, respect for women and girls, and leadership in violence prevention.

Another successful program, pioneered by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, focuses on reducing dating violence and risky sexual behaviours among youth. The program also promotes emotional health and wellness through the development of healthy relationships with friends, partners and family.

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We all have a responsibility to work towards positive change in societal norms that perpetuate violence against women. These government and community programs should inspire and engage all of us, as policy-makers and community members, to participate in the critical work of creating a society where domestic violence is no longer viewed as an inevitable social ill. Together, we must take action to build a healthier society, to foster resilience and prevent domestic violence before it occurs.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Parkdale-High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll never forget the day that she came running into our church. She was a respected member of our congregation. Many of you know I'm a United Church minister as well as a member of provincial Parliament. It was in the middle of the day. The church was a busy, humming place, lots of programming going on in various rooms. She was terrified. She was looking for a place to hide, and shortly after she came in and hid in my office, her husband came in trying to find her. He went around the church, banging on every door, yelling at everybody. He wasn't drunk. He was upper-middle-class. And for a second, we all got, in that congregation, what that poor woman lived with every day of her life.

I listened to the minister read out the names. It's always profoundly moving, 24 years later, about the massacre at École Polytechnique. But the simple reality is that each year more than 100,000 women and children stay in shelters for abused women. On any given day, that's 3,000 women, along with their 2,500 children, and the situation for them is becoming ever more dangerous over the last 10 years.

I'll give you some examples.

Cornerstone Family Violence Prevention Centre is in Northumberland county. I met with them just recently. In 2006-07, they turned away four women. Now, remember, when they turn away women from the shelter, they are turning them away to a perhaps lethal outcome. We know that women are most at risk when they are leaving their household with their children, so when they turn them away, they turn them away to danger.

They turned away four in 2006-07; the next year, 30; the next year, 43 were turned away; the next year, 32 were turned away; the next year, 53 were turned away; the next year, 60 were turned away; the next year after that, 61; and this year, 2013-14, in the first five months alone, they have turned away 72 women.

Let me tell you about what's happening in Toronto at Victim Services, which is the only service, front-line agency, that provides support services for victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse immediately. They go out with the police to the scene and immediately, on the site, provide assistance. They work seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

Their funding per victim has dropped from \$286 in 1990 to \$31 in 2010. Chief Blair and the police do fundraisers every year for them, and that doesn't even begin to make up for the shortfall. They, by the way, do not get any money from the Ontario Sexual Violence Action Plan. They are the only agency that, on the spot after an incident, is there to help children and women.

So I have to ask, what will it take? Will it take the death of a child or a woman, or both, before this government acts to remedy what is a crisis situation?

I have to tell you that in meeting with front-line agencies and workers, all of them reported crisis situations. There were at that point in Oshawa, when I met with them, probably 30 agencies represented. Not one of them was happy with current conditions. All of them had flat-lined funding. All of them were promised something sometime, "The cheque's in the mail," but the cheque wasn't arriving. Meanwhile, these women and children are being turned away and there's nowhere else for them to go.

Now, 24 years ago, we had a wakeup call as a community. I had a wakeup call in my own congregation when this woman, who will go unnamed, came running in looking for assistance. Wakeup calls, I suspect, happen in the lives of many women, even in this chamber. Certainly many women in our communities have had wakeup calls about what violence truly means. When we think about how every six days a woman dies, if it were any other group, Mr. Speaker, it would be a national calamity. But it's women and it's children. And it's getting worse.

So I say, enough talk. I've said this for eight years in this place. Action: We need action. Cornerstone needs action. Victim Services needs action. Most importantly, Mr. Speaker, the women and children in our constituencies: All of them need action. They need it today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will now observe a moment of silence, as requested by the minister.

The House observed a moment's silence.

PETITIONS

JURY DUTY

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. Actually, this would be a good idea for a private member's bill. But it reads as follows:

"Whereas completing jury duty presents many challenges to seniors (travel, health, financial);

"Where service as a juror may cause significant harm for those dependent on the individual selected for jury duty;

"Whereas the provinces of Alberta, British Columbia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Quebec and Saskatchewan as well as the Yukon territory all provide opportunities for jury duty exemption for persons over the age of 65;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario allow individuals over the age of 65; those in sole care of children under the age of seven that are not in full-day school; or those in sole care of individuals with health or mental health illness requiring constant care the option of being exempt from jury duty with the option for individuals with permanent health conditions to be exempted permanently"—upon request—"from being a juror."

I'm pleased to sign and support this very practical suggestion, and present it to Niam, one of the pages.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas there are a growing number of reported cases of abuse, neglect and substandard care for our seniors in long-term-care homes; and

"Whereas people with complaints have limited options, and frequently don't complain because they fear repercussions, which suggests too many seniors are being left in vulnerable situations without independent oversight; and

"Whereas Ontario is one of only two provinces in Canada where the Ombudsman does not have independent oversight of long-term-care homes. We need accountability, transparency and consistency in our long-term-care home system;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to expand the Ombudsman's mandate to include Ontario's long-term-care homes in order to protect our most vulnerable seniors."

I fully support this petition, Mr. Speaker, will affix my name to it, and ask page Marina to bring it to the clerk.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly signed by a group of

individuals from all over the city of Toronto, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas there are over 8,000 children and youth living under the care of the crown and of children's aid societies in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario Legislature hosted the 'Our Voice, Our Turn: Youth Leaving Care Hearings' in the fall of 2011; and

"Whereas these hearings made it clear that more must be done to support these young people and to raise awareness; and

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"Whereas by proclaiming May 14 of each year as 'Children and Youth in Care Day,' the province would raise awareness and recognize the unique challenges faced by children and youth living in care; and

"Whereas Ontario's children's aid societies, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, and members of the community, including children and youth living in care, want to officially celebrate 'Children and Youth in Care Day' on May 14, 2014; and

"Whereas Bill 53, known as the 'Children and Youth in Care Day Act,' proposed by MPP Soo Wong, passed with unanimous support on May 9, 2013, but has since been delayed from being called for third reading;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario call Bill 53 for third reading immediately; and

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact Bill 53, the Children and Youth in Care Day Act, before May 2014."

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition, and send it down with page Spencer.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Durham.

Interjection: Oshawa.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Oshawa.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That was a terrible mistake. I apologize.

GREENBELT

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Greenbelt Act was passed by the Ontario Legislature in 2005, affecting property rights in Ontario; and

"Whereas the right to own, use, enjoy and the opportunity to earn a living from private property is the basis of freedom and democracy; and

"Whereas the greenbelt restricts property owners in the use, enjoyment and ability to earn a living from their private property; and

"Whereas property owners are not being compensated for any loss of these rights;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the greenbelt plan area at the 10-year re-evaluation in 2015 to allow additional development when requested by the community and supported by the local municipality."

I affix my name in full support.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario regarding temporary job agency reform.

"Whereas many Ontarians employed through temporary employment (help) agencies tend to face unlawful wage deductions, unsafe workplace conditions, with no benefits or severance;

"Whereas a 2012 study conducted by the United Way and McMaster University, entitled *It's More Than Poverty: Employment Precarity and Household Well-being*, found that 40% of workers in Ontario are in employment relationships that share characteristics of precarious or non-permanent employment;

"Whereas the same 2012 study suggests that as precarious employment increases, Ontario's workers face increased stress on households, limits on community participation, and increased instances of poverty;

"Whereas the instances of employment standards violations continues to disproportionately impact employees of temporary help agencies, perpetuating issues of precarious employment and poverty for those employed through these agencies;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly undertake legislative reforms to address the inequities created for employees as a consequence of precarious employment through temporary job agencies and safeguard the rights of vulnerable workers, guarantee employee safety, and ensure that all workers in Ontario can be safe."

I agree with this petition, and I'll hand it to page Sarah.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'd like to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on behalf of Ajax and Pickering residents.

"Whereas the regions of York and Durham are at the final stages of completing an EA for the YD-WPCP (York Durham water pollution control plant's) outfall; and

"Whereas the regions of York and Durham have chosen as the final solution an alternative which will not address the quantity of total phosphorus (TP) nor soluble reactive phosphorus (SRP) being deposited into Lake Ontario; and

"Whereas Lake Ontario has been identified as the most stressed lake of the Great Lakes in the July/August 2013 issue of *Canadian Geographic*; and

"Whereas the town of Ajax and PACT POW (Pickering Ajax Citizens Together—Protecting our Water) have documented the excessive algae blooms on the Ajax waterfront with photos and complaints to the region of Durham; and

"Whereas SRP, and indirectly TP, contribute to the growth of algae in Lake Ontario;

"Therefore we undersign this petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and ask that the government of Ontario require the regions of York and Durham to implement an alternative that will reduce the amount of phosphorus (both TP and SRP) being deposited into Lake Ontario from the YD-WPCP," which of course is the York Durham water pollution control plant outfall.

I will sign my name and pass it to Spencer.

CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas more than 850,000 Ontarians live with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease or COPD (more than 70,000 in Central LHIN) and these numbers are climbing quickly; and

"Whereas COPD is one of the most costly chronic diseases in Ontario, currently responsible for 24% of emergency department visits and 24% of hospitalizations in this province; and

"Whereas respiratory rehabilitation is a Health Quality Ontario endorsed, evidence-based intervention that improves quality of life for people with COPD and other lung diseases while saving health care dollars; and

"Whereas due to lack of dedicated funding for lung health programs the respiratory rehabilitation program at Southlake Regional Health Centre—the only such program in Central LHIN—was recently cancelled;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to urge Central LHIN—and all LHINs—to develop evidence-based plans to address COPD and other lung diseases that coordinate resources and care across all levels of the health care system; and further,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to immediately work with stakeholders to develop a province-wide action plan for lung health to improve prevention, early diagnosis and patient outcomes, while maximizing the return on health care investment."

Thank you. I have affixed my signature to this and given it to page Cynthia.

DENTAL CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over Ontario.

"Whereas thousands and thousands of adults live with pain and infection because they cannot afford dental care;

"Whereas the promised \$45-million dental fund under the Poverty Reduction Strategy excluded impoverished adults;

"Whereas the programs were designed with rigid criteria so that most of the people in need do not qualify; and

"Whereas desperately needed dental care money went unspent and was diverted to other areas even though people are still suffering without access to dental care;"

They ... "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario" to do "all in its power to stop the dental fund being diverted to support other programs;" and to "fully utilize the commissioned funding to provide dental care to" people "in need."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Morgan to bring it to the Clerk.

JOB CREATION

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I have a petition from members of my community of Scarborough–Guildwood.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there are significant challenges facing young people entering the job market;

"Whereas small businesses can play an important role in creating job opportunities, especially for youth; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has introduced measures to encourage job creation;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly support Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act."

I will sign this petition and give it to page Amy.

ASTHMA

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I have a petition of mine, "Ryan's Fight: Asthma Awareness.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas on October 9, 2012, 12-year-old Ryan Gibbons unnecessarily died of an asthma attack at school;

"Whereas one in five students in Ontario schools has asthma; and

"Whereas asthma is a disease that can be controlled; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of Ontario schools to ensure asthma-safe environments;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Education to take measures to protect pupils with asthma by ensuring all school boards put in place asthma-management plans based on province-wide standards."

I have over 1,000 names signed here. Today, we'll take care of that business. I affix my signature to it.

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I have a petition from members of my community in Bramalea–Gore–Malton. It's a petition to raise the minimum wage.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's minimum wage has been frozen at \$10.25 an hour since 2010, and some workers earn ... less due to current exemptions in the Employment Standards Act; and

"Whereas full-time minimum wage workers are living at nearly 20% below the poverty line as measured by" Ontario's "low-income measure...; and

"Whereas minimum wage should, as a matter of principle, bring people working 35 hours per week above the poverty line; and

1400

"Whereas an immediate increase in the minimum wage to \$14 per hour would bring workers' wages 10% above the LIM poverty line; and

"Whereas raising the minimum wage will benefit workers, local businesses and the economy by putting money in workers' pockets to spend in their local community;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately increase the minimum wage to \$14 per hour for all workers and thereafter increase it annually by no less than the cost of living."

I affix my name to the petition and I hand it to page Michaela to hand forward.

CHARITABLE GAMING

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's a pleasure to read the following petition into the record.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario, through the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, levies the Ontario provincial fee on the sale of break-open tickets by charitable and non-profit organizations in the province; and

"Whereas local hospital auxiliaries/associations across the province, who are members of the Hospital Auxiliaries Association of Ontario, use break-open tickets to raise funds to support local health care equipment needs in more than 100 communities across the province; and

"Whereas, in September 2010, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario announced a series of changes to the Ontario provincial fee which included a reduction of the fee for certain organizations and the complete elimination of the fee for other organizations, depending on where the break-open tickets are sold; and

"Whereas the September 2010 changes to the Ontario provincial fee unfairly treat certain charitable and non-profit organizations (local hospital auxiliaries) by not providing for the complete elimination of the fee which would otherwise be used by these organizations to

increase their support for local health care equipment needs and other community needs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to eliminate the Ontario provincial fee on break-open tickets for all charitable and non-profit organizations in Ontario and allow all organizations using this fundraising tool to invest more funds in local community projects, including local health care equipment needs, for the benefit of Ontarians."

I agree with this petition and affix my name, and I'll give it to page Yong Da to take to the table.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Unfortunately, that concludes the time we have for petitions.

PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESSPROTECTION OF MINORS
IN AMATEUR SPORTS ACT, 2013LOI DE 2013 SUR LA PROTECTION
DES MINEURS PARTICIPANT
À DES SPORTS AMATEURS

Mr. Ouellette moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 104, An Act to provide protection for minors participating in amateur sports / Projet de loi 104, Loi visant à protéger les mineurs qui participent à des sports amateurs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Thanks, all, for being here again today.

I'm going to give a bit of a history on what the intention of this bill is. It's the fifth time that I've had the opportunity to debate it.

One of the things that I've been blessed with—or cursed with, because you always remember the good and the bad things—is memory. I can recall, when I was in grade 6, that we had a new principal brought into the school at that time. My father, who was a police officer at the time, turned to me and he said, "Listen, I just want you to stay away from that individual. I don't want you to go near that individual. I don't want you alone in any way, shape, or form."

I said—you know, you're in grade 6—"Why, Dad?"

Like I said, Dad was a cop, and when he went into cop mode, you backed off. He said, "Because I said so!"

Two years later, I recall, I was in grade 8, and I asked him, "Dad, why did you tell me, when I was in grade 6, to stay away from that new principal at the school?"

He said, "The reason was because I had arrested him for sexually molesting a 14-year-old boy in Continental Massage in downtown Oshawa." There was no way to recognize the individual or discipline them or ensure that

it never happened again by removing them from that occupation.

At that time, when I was in grade 8, I said, "Listen, that's wrong. And if I ever get a chance to do anything about it, that's exactly what I'm going to do."

When I first came here, the very first bill that I tried to work with when we were in power was dealing with individuals in this fashion in that profession, and trying to ensure that those individuals are not affiliated or associated with children and youth in any way, shape or form, to make sure that the kids don't have—and I have to say that nothing ever happened to me in the school, and it hasn't happened to me, to my life, in this particular case, nor do I know individuals. But I can tell you, that particular principal went to jail 20 years after I left that school for the things that he did with kids, and it wasn't stopped at that time.

What I've tried to do is, I've tried to bring forward a bill. I thought it had finally all taken place when the Minister of Education—it was Janet Ecker at the time—brought forward a bill that dealt with this particular issue.

Life was fine until I started coaching hockey. Our boys came along, and I started coaching kids' hockey. While we were out there, out playing rep hockey in Oshawa, a little NHL "novice A" hockey, one of the parents came to me and said, "Coach, you see that referee out there? They shouldn't be there with kids." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "I can't tell you, but I'm telling you right now, that person should not be out there with those kids." "Well, why?" "I can't tell you." "Why can't you tell me?" "Because of my job." "Where do you work?" "I can't tell you that. But I'm telling you right now, that individual should not be out with those kids in any way, shape or form."

So, as an elected official, you make contacts; you do your due diligence and try to do the background checks. Lo and behold, I found out through my sources that the individual had multiple convictions involved with kids.

So I started a process. I went to the referees' association, and I said to the association, "Look, you've got an individual who shouldn't be out there with kids at all." Because for those who know, I believe it's at 12 years old that you can start reffing hockey, as long as you have a senior official out there with you. It would mean that this individual, this convicted pedophile, would be in the same room as a 12-year-old, and those are the sorts of things that I tried to stop way back when I first started the legislation process.

Well, I went to the association. They were all excited and upset. So I asked for a meeting about a month later, and I said, "What's going on? I see that person out there on the ice still." They said, "Jerry, you don't know what you're talking about." I said, "We've checked up on this person." They read his application and they said, "Do you realize he's a police officer?" And I looked at them and I said, "Do you realize he's been convicted of impersonating a police officer?"

Well, this individual has since been deported out of Canada and no longer participates. But when this took

place, I met with Hockey Canada, and I met with the great people here at the Legislature to try to bring forward legislation that will address this issue. I explained to Hockey Canada that this was what was taking place, that anybody affiliated with kids, which included the coaches, managers and trainers, as well as the referees—because, quite frankly, I always try to instill in the kids that I coach that if the referee tells you to do something, you respect that individual and you follow the guidelines. So if one of the referees had said, "Hey, you, kid. Come here. I want to talk to you," that kid would have taken the direction of the coach and followed that individual.

Hockey Canada then came forward with a program that required background checks for all referees. But when we did the research for this, we found out that—and it was great, the legislative research here. We asked them to start looking around, and they suggested, "Why don't we look at other sports as well?" So we start looking out in all the sports in the province of Ontario, and, lo and behold, we find out that there is no consistency for background checks in any sport. Hockey, because of what's happened with Sheldon Kennedy and a number of other individuals, has a great program province-wide and Canada-wide to ensure that there are background checks, but there's no consistency in any of the other sports in Ontario. So we brought forward a bill and looked at the possibilities of what may happen and the implications of having background checks.

Since April 2012, when I debated this, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you—here are some of the headlines. September of this year: "Toronto Police Charge Former Softball, Hockey Coach with Child Sexual Assault." April 2012: "Swim Coach Charged in Alleged Sex Assault of a Minor." "Lacrosse Coach Charged with Sex Assault to Appear in Court." "Former Hockey Coach"—and the list goes on and on and on, and it's happening on a regular basis.

What I'm trying to bring forward and trying to have the Legislature do is have what's called a vulnerable persons check. Essentially, what happens is the individuals would make application through a police department, and there has been some controversy which I'll try to address in regard to this, whereby a vulnerable persons check would be asked for for individuals.

Now, I'm going to answer some of the questions, because I know the member from Trinity-Spadina, the last time we debated this, had a number of questions on this.

What somebody would do is they would go in—and most of the volunteers participate as a hockey coach, a lacrosse coach and in other aspects as well. So they would ask for multiple copies. They would ask for four copies, for example, and then would be able to submit one of those copies—and they pay a one-time fee—to each sport that they participate in. That way, it reduces some of the costs and burden on the individuals and the background check for the entire process.

But what this does is it checks individuals to make sure that we're not having convicted or charged individ-

uals, who have been charged with dealing drugs, for example, out with kids who might be responsive, receptive—or individuals who have a number of drinking and driving charges. Do we want those kids driving, quite frankly—last weekend was a tournament in Chicago and last month was in Philly and those things. Do you want that sort of individual?

All this does is establish a parameter by which the leagues can determine if this individual should be one that they want coaching or participating with their kids. So it gives the league the opportunity to review and take a look and do due diligence for the organization.

1410

The member from Trinity-Spadina as well had asked questions about the limitation of scope in regard to this, because it's dealing with amateur sport only.

SportOntario would decide exactly what sports are considered amateur sports. We're not talking about kids playing road hockey; we're talking about organized ones that would receive funding from the province through SportOntario, like lacrosse, basketball, baseball, softball, hockey and all those sorts of sports that have organized aspects to them.

You have to start somewhere. What this does is kind of set the groundwork for other individuals or other volunteers in other parts of society to be able to have that infrastructure in place in order to move forward with it.

I can tell you that there was a lot of concern with the cost of it, but when you look realistically—I think I paid \$25 last year. Our league has accepted it for a number of years now with hockey, so I pay that one-time fee that, quite frankly, most coaches charge back to the team and the team ends up paying it. So it costs maybe a dollar a player, sort of thing, in order to cover the cost for the background check. I can recall that some organizations were all upset: "If we move forward with this, we're going to lose all kinds of volunteers." My first response was, "Is that the sort of volunteer you want in your organization? Why wouldn't they want these background checks?" We want to make sure that the kids are protected in the best way we possibly can.

Quite frankly, these background checks only talk about past behaviour. Those are the individuals who were caught. But it sets a precedent out there whereby individuals who are looking at these areas—I mentioned a couple here. Sometimes these predatory aspects—what I'm being told is that they will develop relationships for a number of years before they actually act on these sorts of things. We want to make sure it sets a precedent and enough of a deterrent for individuals that, "Hey, this is an area we need you to stay away from and not participate in this activity in any way, shape, or form."

Also, I know that one of the members here spoke about Volunteer Canada and the 10-step screening that took place. Essentially, the police check is step 7, which is a very key one.

Of the other ones, the first is assessment and then position assignment. So they go into an organization: "What do you need for positions?" That's the assessment

to determine—for example, in hockey, for which I'm an on-ice instructor now, we have coaches, trainers, managers and on-ice assistants—and then, position assignment. So you go through a process: "Okay, we need this many coaches and this many trainers and this many assistant coaches," as well as recruitment: "Where are we going to get them from?" That's the application process, and then you go through an interview process, which deals with references.

The seventh part is the police checks, and then there is orientation and training.

I can tell you that the law, although we've had it pass second reading four times now—hopefully it will pass again and we can get it to committee. As a result of bringing this bill forward, we've had a significant amount of interest generated from a large number of organizations. For example, Ontario Lacrosse contacted me and asked me to speak as one of the keynote speakers at their luncheon to explain this process, because they wanted to move forward but didn't know how. They didn't know how to do it and where to start.

It was quite simple. All it was, was individuals who have applications. They go and do a police background check—there are companies that provide this service out there so a league can go and get a reduced rate en masse for all its people participating in it with the kids. They can go, and then the league reviews them. They open the sealed envelope and decide, "Yes, this is a person we want involved with our kids; no, this is a person we don't want," and they don't need to disclose any information in any way, shape or form. They just say, "Thank you very much. We have chosen somebody else to coach this particular team that you've applied for." That way, these organizations have the ability to check and say, "No, this is a one-time issue that happened 25, 30, 40 years ago. It's not something to worry about."

Lacrosse Ontario actually said they were moving forward with it, even if it didn't pass. The same thing happened with the Canadian Ski Patrol. They said they really appreciated it and thought it was a good thing, and they were going to talk to other organizations.

The design of it: We found, when we did the research, that there were organizations in the province of Ontario that already provided this service and had guidelines for how long it was good for. All we're doing is—you find out how long in Ontario it's going to be, how long it's going to take place, and we'll move forward with that.

All I can say is that we want to do the best we can to make sure our kids are protected in any way, shape, or form possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek on a point of order.

Mr. Paul Miller: I don't believe we have a quorum.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'll ask the table to check to see if a quorum is present.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Trevor Day): A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Further debate.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm pleased to speak to this bill and thank the member from Oshawa for bringing this issue to the Legislature again, for the fifth time: five attempts to bring greater safety and security to our youth. It's unbelievable to me, Speaker—actually it's unconscionable—that legislation to protect youth in sports has not become law yet. I want to be sure that the provisions in the bill provide the best protection of our youth who just want to enjoy a solid sports experience. Of course, some want to move on up through the ranks of provincial, national, international, Pan/Parapan Am and Olympic status.

Also, Speaker, I'll be sharing a couple of minutes with the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton.

In the explanatory note, it sets out who will be subject of the police report. I think it's a good list. Referees, other officials, trainers and coaches must all agree to have a police force release a copy of their criminal record to the organizer of the sports activity. But it doesn't talk about the facility staff having a police check. As we know, one of the most horrendous perpetrators of abuse to young children was an usher at a facility here in Toronto, someone who used his position to coerce these young, bright-eyed hopeful youth into a downward spiral of abuse. In the definitions to the act, it doesn't include provincial legislation that identifies child care providers, family or not, who have a record of abuse, and I wonder if this also should be included.

The act states that the minister may appoint any person to be an investigator. That person can look into the compliance with the act. This causes me some concern also. I would want to know that the investigator is governed by the rules or laws that ensure very careful application of the investigator's duties and confidentiality. I would also want to be sure that the investigator did not overstep the authority of their position and seek other personal, confidential information.

It also provides authority to seize and detain information, but it doesn't seem to provide rules for how that information is held and who has access to it. It's also doesn't clarify how an investigator would obtain a warrant issued under section 158 of the Provincial Offences Act. I also want to know, Speaker, to whom an investigator reports her or his findings and what action stems from that report.

Although I understand the intent of the "no liability" sections of the bill, I do have some concerns about them and look forward to full discussion when this bill comes before the standing committee for public hearings and debate. I anticipate participating in the process of writing the regulations that will clarify all of these questions.

It is clear to me, Speaker, that many sports organizations already have policies and practices in place that address the intent of this bill. But implementing an across-the-board system that will ensure equal practices across this province makes good sense. The bill's intent is to make the system clear and to remove any chance of any problem being created or anything falling through the cracks. Organizations will be clear about the protec-

tion of minors, and this does not start, nor should it end, with a mandatory criminal record check.

The government must be committed to listening to the variety of concerns that sports organizations have and be willing to act on these, and the standing committee process will provide this platform. I'll encourage the subcommittee members to expand the time allocated for deputations at the standing committee so that as many organizations as possible can bring forward their concerns and their recommendations to make the bill even more complete and as strong as possible.

We have already received the comments and concerns of Sport4Ontario in their submission on the 2009 version of this bill, and they make a good point. It's not just in sports that child abuse occurs. There are often people in walks of life that could cause harm to a child. But this bill is a start, addressing a sector where sexual abuse of children has caught the headlines in the last few years. It's been in the hockey sector where athletes have taken the courageous step of going public with their abuse, and their courage has brought attention to this sector.

Sport 4 Ontario speaks of police record checks, saying "There is no question of the merit of the screening process and its direct impact on reducing risk within the environment. Screening is a necessary step not only to protect minors, but also to protect the organization itself from fraudulent activities that may affect its ability to meet stated objectives."

They note that the police checks are not a new initiative within the non-profit sector and that, "For organizations that serve the vulnerable population and that rely on volunteers to satisfy their objectives, there is no room for complacency.

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Sport4Ontario also delineates other concerns. Effective screening, as prescribed by Volunteer Canada, is a 10-step process. It takes into consideration the position of the volunteer and the level of risk to people and assets. It requires applications, interviews and reference checks, and requires orientation, training, supervision and evaluation of volunteers.

A criminal record check is but one of 10 steps, and although it may help an organization to make a sound decision, on its own it does not provide effective screening. Criminal record checks cannot provide an accurate assessment of someone's suitability or provide a complete criminal history. A criminal record check from the local police detachment may only capture criminal convictions within that particular jurisdiction. If a person moves from town to town and leaves a trail of convictions, they may not be disclosed. Bill 104 does not require a criminal record check that includes a CPIC—Canadian Police Information Centre—check that would capture criminal convictions across the country. Criminal record checks do not capture dropped charges or investigations of criminal behaviour.

A question that Sport4Ontario also raised is, how does an organization deal with a positive police check? Should the police check information come directly to the

organization? Is it then in the position of informing the prospective volunteer? Perhaps consideration should be made of setting out a system such that the police would contact the prospective volunteer directly about a positive police check. This would allow a person to look into the results of the police check, ensure the accuracy and then perhaps reconsider applying to volunteer. This would take the sports organization out of any possible conflict situation.

Sport4Ontario addresses this issue by stating that:

"There are instances when a volunteer may present with a previous conviction from their early adulthood, or with a conviction that is not related to the position they seek to obtain, and has no bearing on their ability to serve as an effective volunteer.

"That they simply provide a criminal record check serves to comply with the legislation.

The legislation does not"—I repeat, does not—"explore the types of offences for which a person might be eliminated from consideration which would create an unbalanced approach throughout the system."

A young person who had perhaps partied, had a few drinks and made the horrible decision to drive might very well have a criminal record, but a DUI may not have an impact on the type of volunteer position they are seeking, and it may have been decades since they acted foolishly as a young person. Their experience may also serve as a good lesson to the youth with whom they would volunteer. So some latitude may be sought, and a positive police check not something that would prevent them from being accepted as a volunteer.

As I raised earlier, I have deep concerns about the protection of confidential information should a police report provide negative results. How is this information retained, who has access to it and what is the system for destruction of the information? I don't know, but it is appropriate to give the police check report directly to the prospective volunteer to deal with.

There really must be a proper system in place for every organization to use for the receipt and retention, as well as the sharing, of information on police check reports. Having said that, I also wonder, should consideration be given to getting information on people charged with an offence that would cause concern about abuse?

And I wonder what criteria the minister should use for the appointment of these investigators. The minister can appoint investigators who have rather broad powers of entering private dwellings and searching, so I want to be very certain about who these people are, what criteria have been used for appointing any one of them. That, along with other concerns, will be raised during the standing committee process.

I want to assure the member of my support for this bill, and that I look forward to fine-tuning and perhaps even writing amendments to make it even stronger and clearer.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I welcome the member from Oshawa for having introduced this bill—for the

fifth time, I understand—the Protection of Minors in Amateur Sport Act. I really do want to acknowledge his persistence, his patience and his commitment. Five times on this certainly is an indication of how important this is to him and how passionate he is about it. As a fellow resident of this member in Durham region, I've come to learn a little bit about him, in that he is very dedicated to the world of amateur sport. I thank him for the work he does in Durham and the region beyond. I think I did speak at least once to this bill before—I'm not sure, but at least once—because it sounds very consistent with what was brought forward before. I wish him luck in bringing this further to the next step.

Just to summarize the bill as I understand it: It would require that any amateur sports program in which a person under the age of 18 may participate will be required to obtain a copy of a criminal record from a police force for every person who acts in a position in that program. That would include people like referees, trainers, coaches and other officials.

As a mom with two kids still in the school system, and with one of them very active in sports, I think this is a bill I can generally support in principle. There are some questions I have. I think there are some issues that need to be addressed in committee. Following the member from the third party from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, I think there's a lot of knowledge in this House from members, such as the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, that can really help see this go where it needs to go. He obviously has a lot of expertise in this area, given his life before Queen's Park or maybe it's his life after hours. I'm not sure if he's still involved in refereeing and coaching and things like that.

I do want to talk just a little bit, Speaker, if I may, about amateur sports in Ontario, where we're at as a government on this right now, and what kind of protections that are in place right now and what kind of investments are already there. In 2013-14, about 58 provincial sports and multi-sport organizations will receive over \$7.6 million in funding. The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, which provides that funding, is committed to ensuring a safe sport environment for all Ontarians, particularly our most vulnerable populations, such as our children and youth. In fact, as a condition of base funding, the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport requires the provincial and multi-sport organizations to implement board-approved risk management policies that include, but are not limited to, things like an anti-doping policy; a code of conduct for boards, athletes, officials and volunteers; conflict-of-interest guidelines to the board and the operational staff; a discipline policy with appeals procedure; and a harassment policy.

Our government also recognizes the significant role that officials and volunteers play in sports. They ensure that the rules are followed and applied in a fair and ethical manner, allowing young people to participate in and have the opportunity to have what we all want them to have, which is an enjoyable experience, of course.

However, there are some questions and some points, I think, to be raised around this bill. The first one is, who

exactly does it apply to? I think the bill mentions those in amateur sports, of course, such as the ones I mentioned before: trainers, coaches, referees. But people under 18, of course, participate in a variety of activities, everything from horseback riding to dance—which my daughter participates in—and other things. We want to be clear about who exactly is covered in this bill. We have to be clear about the people around the sports who are supporting it: parents, community volunteers. Some of these things are for more informal activities, like weekend pickup games and things like that. Are they captured in this bill? I'm not sure.

We also want to make sure that we're not running into any unintended legal consequences or employment issues with respect to the criminal record side of this. There are privacy concerns, perhaps. The bill requires two organizations to get and keep a copy of the criminal record, but they can become stale and could be considered, perhaps, prejudicial to an individual, depending on what the record says, and if an individual obtains a pardon for their record of conviction, that should be destroyed. This could be problematic for amateur sport. We don't want to have situations where an organization might hold copies of those prior records without knowledge of a subsequent pardon, for example. So those are some of the concerns.

1430

The bill is quite specific in some areas, but there are a couple of areas I've mentioned that I think are worth examining further. It is something that I know the member is very passionate about, and I think I sense a lot of will around the Legislature to move this forward in a constructive way. Again, I thank the member from Oshawa for his commitment and his persistence. Let's see where this goes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's indeed an honour to stand in support of my colleague from Oshawa, Mr. Ouellette. He has a great reputation in his participation. And on this bill, specifically, it's the fifth time around.

I'll also say, at a personal level, I know how engaged he is. He has two sons, both very talented boys. In fact, the first one was born just after he was elected here in 1995. Both Josh and Garrett are—I know them; I've met them. I've actually played golf with Garrett. He's a huge guy who can hit the ball 100 miles. But I know his father has been engaged. In fact, we were just chatting that he would be engaged probably in a tournament this weekend.

I think everyone here realizes that it's not just hearsay. He has been persistent on it, and just in preparation, I looked into this. There's a national research group. It's called Justplay, a firm that logs critical incidents in youth sports. It has recently conducted research for hockey, soccer, football and baseball leagues. Its findings indicate that coaches are the significant cause of abusive contact and conduct in youth sports. Justplay has recorded 9,300 incidents in just over 23,800 hockey games in three Ontario leagues alone. That's the number of incidents,

and that's 39% of all games that have a serious instance of abuse.

Now, academic studies aren't the only story. It's from personal experience with coaches and all of us as parents. I certainly am a parent with five children. Over that time, I was drawn in, like many parents, to be supportive of their child and look out for them and, to some extent, become engaged voluntarily, often as a manager or a coach. In my case, I was quite competitive and quite reasonably athletic, I would say. Just looking into that, I coached in certainly hockey—I played at a fairly good level there—but also soccer, swimming and skiing. In fact, I am a ski instructor to this day. It has really graduated as you're with young people.

Here's really an admission in public. When Jerry first started talking about this—I never would be in any way physical with children, but I am fairly competitive. I know that when I was a soccer coach I used to yell my head off, which isn't proper behaviour. I think that those kinds of clinics that I went to when I was first in soccer, because I really didn't know much about the game and they were always looking for coaches—everyone should be mindful today with the stress. Even these studies that I referred to indicated that this causes elevated distress levels and anxiety, even from physical and aggressive abuse. It causes lower performance, so you're really not helping by yelling at the kids. Now, I'd say hopefully I was not too bad with my children. I think my children are fine, and I'm very proud of them, but I'm sure I was a pretty assertive parent; there's no question about it.

But the government of Ontario needs to create a framework in which critical incidents in amateur sports—and other activities, as he was talking about, other people who are in contact with children—and we can expand that beyond sport—need to prevent.

Certainly I support the intent here; it's that there's a criminal background check. That's just the beginning. Education is certainly a component of this. I commend the member from Oshawa for persistently bringing it forward. I would encourage all members to support it in the spirit of the season, as well as the real protection of children at the heart of this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: It's a pleasure to rise and add my voice to the debate.

I want to first and foremost recognize the member from Oshawa and the fact that he has done some great work here. This is, I believe, the fifth time that the member has tabled this bill.

I was also struck by his story. I don't know if any of the youth who are in the assembly were listening, but the member from Oshawa was basically eight years old. He was in school when he was faced with an issue and he made a promise to his dad that if ever he was in a position to make a law that would help future youth in a similar situation, he said he would do it. Lo and behold, the member from Oshawa made his way as an elected official and is now in the Legislative Assembly, and he

put forward a bill to protect young people. I was quite impressed by that story. So maybe if you have an idea, as a young person, that maybe in the future you'll become an elected official—maybe an MPP or a city councillor or an MP—and the ideas you have now you can help implement when you get elected. Even still, if you have a great idea, send it our way and we'll try to get it implemented sooner than that.

I also want to talk about some of the considerations of the bill. I think it's very important, first and foremost, that we protect our youth, that we do whatever we can to make sure that young people playing in sports—engaging in activities that we want to encourage—are protected, that their environment is safe, and that we do whatever we can to make sure there's a framework across the province so it's not just in some areas that there's good strong protection but it's actually across the province.

We know that there are many organizations already that have safety checks in place. They have criminal checks and other things of that nature. But the problem is that there isn't a provincial framework that makes sure that across the entire province there is consistency with respect to the way we monitor those who are dealing with young people. I think that's one of the issues that the member is trying to address.

One of the areas that I want to touch on before I finish up—the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek brought it up—is that we have to be careful about who we preclude or stop from having access to our youth. The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek brought up a great example and I want to build on that: There are some cases where people who have a criminal record might actually act as a great role model. I can tell you a brief story of a good friend of mine who actually had quite a serious youth record for an assault, an assault with a weapon; he spent some time in jail. He was in a bad group of friends. He was in a horrible circumstance, and he actually made his way out of that bad circumstance. He ended up getting a university degree and went on to become a lawyer. He now acts as a great role model and tells youth about healthy choices, appropriate choices, and how they can avoid getting into some of the trouble that he got into. He's a great lawyer, a great youth advocate, but he did have a criminal record. Now he's been pardoned, but it goes to show that there can be people with great assets who can help and contribute to our society who may have faced some difficulties.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: It's my pleasure to rise in this House to speak to Bill 104. I'd like to also join in thanking the member for bringing this forward, given the importance of safety for children in our province, but also fostering an environment in which they can learn and grow and participate in amateur sports. I think that, certainly, the persistence of the member in championing this bill is to be commended.

Amateur sport plays a significant role in our communities across the province, and it especially prepares

young people for life. I think that's something that we've all seen in terms of amateur sports across the province.

It's an especially important time, with the Pan Am/Parapan Am Games coming in 2015. We know that sports will be an inspired topic right across Ontario and it will invite many young people to join in and to participate in their communities. This celebration of sport and culture is really an important way to motivate young people to participate in their communities, and building a culture of sport and recreation makes our communities healthy and strong places. It allows our young people to experience extremely important life skills and values that help them throughout their lives, such as teamwork. It inspires a sense of achievement and provides a sense of discipline, as well as structure, to a young person in their formative years.

1440

I certainly recall that one of my fondest memories was watching my niece, who lives in Whitby, playing soccer when she was three years old. It was just a wonderful moment. All of the children were on the field, and what was amazing to me was how structured they were in playing this game at that young age—and all of the coaches and referees who were there, surrounded by families that were looking on. I was so proud of my niece because I could see a budding athlete just then at the age of three.

Speaker, the bill is an important aspect of ensuring our children's safety. It looks at amateur sports programs so people under the age of 18 have added protection by having a copy of a criminal record from a police force for every person who is acting in a position within that program that deals with children under the age of 18. It ensures that the organizers have really thought through and paid attention to the backgrounds of their volunteers, especially in key positions such as referees, other officials, trainers and coaches. A person is not allowed to hold any of those positions without consenting to have a police force release a copy of his or her criminal record to the organizer. This is a very important factor, I think, in attracting people to our amateur sports system.

I do want to point out that the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport is committed to ensuring safe sport environments for all Ontarians, particularly our most vulnerable populations, such as Ontario's children and youth, who perhaps don't yet have a voice. It's to ensure that we provide a system that protects them. That is why we support programs and services that protect children and youth when competing in sports and recreation activities throughout this province.

I just want to reiterate that we want to have the safest systems possible for Ontario's children participating in activities in their communities. We also want to ensure that this bill receives the attention it duly deserves, ensuring that we don't have any unintended consequences, such as, how is the record-keeping going to be treated? Does it respect our province's human rights laws as well as its privacy laws? Those are still important aspects that need to be thought through to strengthen this bill.

I want to commend once again the member from Oshawa for really championing this bill and championing a very important value that we all share in Ontario, which is sportsmanship; and ensuring that our children are participating in a safe way, really getting the benefit that we all desire from their being part of these sports and recreational activities; and that we have a system in place that protects their rights.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: It is my pleasure to rise this afternoon in support of Bill 104, An Act to provide protection for minors participating in amateur sports. As the former critic for children and youth and a mother of five, I would like to commend my colleague from Oshawa for his thoughtfulness in drafting this legislation and for his persistence in bringing it forward once again.

Bill 104 proposes to establish mandatory criminal background checks for all those who would volunteer with sports organizations which serve those under the age of 18. No one would be permitted to hold the positions of referee, trainer, coach or other amateur sports official without first consenting to have the police force release a copy of his or her criminal record to the organizer.

Many organizations have policies regulating background checks, which is a reassuring thing. But the fact remains that there are currently no provincial minimum standards or guidelines. At the present time, there exist no legislative requirements for mandatory criminal background checks for volunteers engaged in organized amateur sports that serve youth under the age of 18. You don't have to be an overprotective parent to understand that this leaves open a significant loophole.

In light of the fact that earlier this week we celebrated International Volunteer Day, it's important to underline that the vast majority of individuals who give of their time and expertise to make amateur sports available to our young people are doing so with the best of intentions. They serve their community and their neighbourhoods and stand as a great example of what it means to be an engaged citizen.

But, of course, we accept that people are for the most part good and yet we take precautions. There's an old proverb made famous by the Great Communicator: "Trust, but verify." I think that's somewhat the spirit of Bill 104, though obviously the trust follows verification.

Bill 104 requires convicted offenders to submit a vulnerable persons police check with the associations in which they are volunteering to ensure whether they should be working with kids. The amateur sports organizer must obtain the copy of the criminal record or the written response no earlier than four years before the day on which the given athletic program begins and no later than 90 days after the day on which the given athletic program begins.

In 2012, I brought forward a piece of youth-oriented private member's legislation, Bill 81, the Inherited Heart Rhythm Disorders Awareness Act. Like Bill 104, it aimed to strengthen protections around young athletes.

My bill was intended to raise awareness of the warning signs of sudden cardiac arrest in children and youth. Spotting those signs, such as fainting, palpitations and shortness of breath during physical activity, and acting appropriately has the potential to help identify sudden cardiac arrest and save a young life.

Similarly, Bill 104 aims to identify warning signs before the unthinkable occurs. This is a valuable tool for amateur sports organizations and will reinforce protections that many already have put in place. Our communities and our children would be better for it, and I am pleased to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Rod Jackson: It is a distinct pleasure to be able to stand and speak to this bill, Bill 104, to provide protection for minors participating in amateur sports.

I myself am the father of two young children who are very involved in amateur sports. My son plays rep baseball and hockey, and my daughter the same. They have coaches who do an amazing job, for starters. They have kind of grown with them through their years in amateur sports, in baseball and hockey, and they've grown to actually love their coaches.

The relationship that children forge with their coaches, and vice versa, is a really important one. They learn a lot of lessons from their coaches and mentors in many cases. They build that trust with them. The fact that on the odd occasion, a very heinous occasion, some adults and coaches take advantage of these situations of trust with these children, in some cases over a period of years, and commit some despicable acts on them, I think we all can agree, is absolutely reprehensible.

When I was a city councillor in Barrie, we had this issue come up locally, and as a council debated quite a bit what local council could do to try to mitigate the damage that could be done by some of these people. Luckily in Barrie, there haven't been any very big cases or nasty situations like this that have happened, but we know them all that have happened nationally, that have gotten national exposure with coaches who have taken advantage of young children, and they're pretty heinous. I think in one case there was actually a Barrie Colt who went on to the NHL and ended up in jail himself for some acts that he committed as a result of having been abused for years and years by his coach. So we need to do more.

Going back to when I was a city councillor, we actually decided as a city council to defer all costs associated with getting a criminal record check at the Barrie police department. Now, anyone who went to get a criminal record check, whether it was for volunteering at their local school, at their child's school, or whether it was going to be a coach for baseball or hockey—I know myself, I coached little league baseball before I had this job; I don't have the time to do it anymore. I had to get a criminal record check, and it cost \$25 at that time. It's not a lot of money and it's well worth it, but at the same time, there are certainly people out there who don't have

the money to do it. So that was one way we were able to make sure that happened and make it easier for people to get those record checks and encourage more people to get involved in children's sports and volunteer in their communities.

1450

But this bill takes it to a whole new level, where now organizations are going to have mandatory criminal background checks for volunteers engaged with amateur sports. I think this is a really big step. It is a shame, I think, as was mentioned earlier, that this is something we're still debating, that this is something that still comes up. It seems to be something that we should just do. It's one of these really simple things we can do to protect our children, and to be debating it here is a bit of a sad story, that the member from Oshawa—I was going to say Durham—has had to bring this forward so many times. And luckily, he's not here to take advantage of that situation.

Interjection: Strike that, Speaker.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Yes.

But it is true that there is a desperate need for this. We need to do everything we can. One child who has been abused by anybody is too many, but one who is being abused by someone we put in the trust of a coach, and anyone who is in a position of trust with our children, is really even more reprehensible than you can imagine.

So whatever we can do to protect our children and make sure that those who are with them on an ongoing basis get criminal record checks, I think we need to do that. Anyone who wants to coach and be around kids shouldn't have a problem with it either, if they don't have anything to hide.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I thank the member for Simcoe Centre for those remarks.

The member for Oshawa has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I very much appreciate the opportunity.

For the ref from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, the Minister of Consumer Services, the ski instructor from Durham, the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton, the members from Scarborough–Guildwood, Burlington and Barrie who spoke today, I'm going to try to get some answers back.

The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek had mentioned the sports facility workers. The intent here is to start somewhere and then eventually expand out. Once you have an infrastructure in place that you can move forward, it's easier to expand. It's difficult enough to get—I mean, five times we've tried to get it. It's difficult enough to get it in here to try and deal with it just the first time, with individuals involved directly.

I'm going to have to check into the investigators aspect that they had mentioned, because this is the first time in the five times that we have dealt with this that that issue has been brought up.

He also mentioned the possibility of the police trying to make the decision whether the individual should be involved. I think the police would be overwhelmed if

they had to go through all the applications. In the Durham region alone, there would be thousands of applications that the police would be expected to review to decide which one is good or which one is not, and that way the associations would make the decision on what should or should not be done.

The question regarding the individuals, who it would be—it would be any officials involved directly with the kids. It does not include pickup games, as I mentioned. The length of the check would be determined on associations, because some associations have been doing it for years, and very successfully, so if theirs are good for five years, why would we change that? And, yes, we're trying to bring some provincial consistency in across Ontario for all organizations, yet give the organizations that are already doing it some flexibility.

In closing, you know, for every one of these newspaper or media reports that we hear of, there are tens of thousands of great volunteers out there doing a great job for the right reason. We need to do what we can to protect those great volunteers out there by removing those bad players who aren't there for the right reasons. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario government should put a stop to new private electricity mega deals which are resulting in electricity rates being more than twice as high as in provinces with publicly owned and accountable electricity systems and that Ontario's Auditor General be given a mandate to review all existing private power contracts and report on value for money.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Bisson has moved private member's notice of motion 56. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Twelve minutes, Mr. Speaker? What am I going to do with that?

First of all, I want to say thank you to the Clerks for drawing me at the bottom of the list again. It is becoming a pretty regular thing whenever we draw PMBs, but 56 is the highest you've had me in a long time. I want to thank you for that.

I just want to say to all members of the House that I hope we're able to support this motion, and I want to lay out the arguments of what this is all about. Currently in Ontario, we have a bit of a mixed system where the government goes out through the OPA and signs private power deals with all kinds of different companies out there that build anything from wind farms to solar farms, non-utility generators using gas, cogens—you name it; they do all of these things. But they're signed with the Ontario Power Authority, and those particular deals, when signed, are not open to any kind of scrutiny.

On the other hand, you've got Ontario Power Generation, which runs everything from Darlington to Pickering

to dams on rivers across this province, and they have some gas-fired and coal-fired plants, all of which are subject to rate approvals by the Ontario Energy Board. It seems to me that there's a bit of a problem here, where you have, on the one hand, public power that is open to scrutiny, because there is not a private contract that's hidden behind closed doors. There is a rate approval process by which you can go before the OEB. You can ask questions, and you can find out what you need to know at the Ontario Energy Board when it comes to a rate approval or a rate increase that they're asking for at the OEB.

But when it comes to, let's say, a wind farm being built in your backyard or a non-utility generator such as gas or cogen being built somewhere near where you live, those particular deals are not subject to FOI—you can't do a freedom of information request in order to get the details on the contracts—and the rates they are paid, as far as how they come up to those rates, are essentially closed shop.

What we're saying—Andrea Horwath and New Democrats—by way of this motion is that we really need to have more transparency in the system. If the private sector is able to compete—and that's the argument—with the public utility generator, Ontario Power Generation, then let's have a bit of a level playing field.

I remember that my good friend Brian Mulroney, a former Prime Minister of Canada, used to talk about, "Oh my God, we need to have a level playing field." Well, I agree with Brian Mulroney: You need a level playing field. And the playing field has to be level in the sense that the public has the right to know.

These are our dollars. Yes, they're paid by way of the money we pay on hydro bills, but they're our dollars, and we as ratepayers have the right to know how much this power is costing us to generate and how we derive the cost that comes to be what's in our bill at the end of the month.

What we have certainly seen over the last number of years, first as a result of Mr. Ernie Eves, a former minister and eventually Premier of Ontario who started this whole, how would you say it, journey down the road of private power and making deals with the OPA for private power generation—since that time, we've seen a huge increase in the price of electricity. I believe, and I think a lot of people out there believe, that part of it is because of the way these particular deals have been structured and what's within those contracts.

For example, let's say you're a wind farm or a gas-fired plant. When you're negotiating your contract and you're going through the FIT process and eventually signing a contract with the OPA, there are a whole bunch of assumptions that you put into your contract about how much it costs you to build it physically, the cost to build the plant, and then how you recoup the investment over a period of—about 20 years is what normally these contracts are all about.

How they arrive at the number that is the rate we pay this particular plant for the generation of power is, I

think, very important for the public to know—how they got there. Is the rate we're paying out for this particular plant reasonable when it comes to the investment that's put in, or is this a bit of a windfall? I think there's some evidence out there that there is a windfall in some of these deals.

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We know that when the Liberals were in opposition, my God, they were so mad at Ernie Eves when he decided to go down the road of private power. They were on this side of the House. They were spinning; they were in orbit. I remember my good friend the member from Sudbury, Mr. Bartolucci, and others would come into this House, and they were upset. They couldn't believe that the Conservative government had done that and how opposed they were to it. They warned Ontarians of the day. They said, "If you go down this route, I tell you now that electricity prices will be double and triple what they are today." We as New Democrats said, "Of course. We know that." Because when you compare public power such as Manitoba, Quebec and the Ontario of the day to other jurisdictions that have private power—or a mixed system, as we have now—power rates have gone up.

But here's the interesting thing: They got elected and they forgot. They completely forgot what they talked about when they were in opposition. All of a sudden, they became Conservatives in a hurry. They decided, "Well, what we've all got to do is, we've got to take the same mantra," because Liberals really believed in what the Tories were trying to do; they were just mad at the Tories because they weren't the ones doing it. They got to the other side of the House and they said, "This is a great opportunity for us to make some really good relationships with people in the private sector. We're able to do this and seem as if we're doing some economic development across Ontario."

But the cost has been that electricity prices in this province have gone through the roof. Let me tell you what it means: We've been reading in the House—my leader, Andrea Horwath; our critic, Mr. Tabuns; other members; and myself—story after story after story where individuals in this province can't afford to pay their hydro bills. Where they used to be able to make ends meet on a particular income when it came to paying the hydro bill, the gas bill, the rent and whatever it might be, people are now saying, "Heck, the hydro bill is putting me out of being able to balance my budget." People are really mad, and I don't blame them. They see the rates go up, they say to themselves, "My God, look at what this is doing to my bill," and they're not able to afford to pay at the end of the month.

But then there's the other side of this whole thing, which is that Ontario Hydro, when it was set up by Mr. Beck some years ago, was set up as an economic development tool. Let me tell you. How did we end up with a smelter and a refinery in the city of Timmins with, then, Kidd Creek? The government of the day—and it was a Conservative government that was in power at that time—made some negotiations with Kidd Creek.

I remember people in Timmins—the mayor; council; and the then member for Cochrane South, as it was called at the time, Alan Pope, who was a member of the cabinet of the government of the day; along with New Democrats and others—were all saying, “Listen, we need to add value to the minerals that we take from the ground, and one of the ways that we can do that is by refining and smelting that metal here.” So we built a smelter and a refinery in the city of Timmins, and it employed somewhere between 700 and 900 people directly at the plant, plus all of the spinoff jobs that came from it.

Fast-forward to all of these private power deals. Xstrata, which then bought Kidd Creek—and Noranda; it got flipped over a couple of times—the Xstrata of the day said, “Listen, we have a plant in Sudbury, we have a plant in Timmins and we have a plant in Quebec. If we look at the cost of power, which is 30% of the cost of operating a smelter and refinery, because you use a lot of electricity in a refinery specifically, we can do it for a lot cheaper by going into Quebec.” Why? Because they have public power and they’re able to have electricity sold at cost. Why? Because that’s how hydro was set up in Ontario, and that’s the way it’s set up in Quebec and Manitoba. It’s used as an economic development tool to attract those types of industry into their jurisdictions, in order to create wealth, create economic opportunity and create jobs.

As a result of the high energy prices, as a result of the electricity prices going through the roof, Xstrata closed down the refinery and they closed down their smelter in the city of Timmins. They’ve since torn it down. We’ve lost those thousands of jobs, direct and indirect, in the city of Timmins, and we will never be the same.

We’ve rebounded somewhat because the price of gold and base metals in Timmins allowed us to do some other investments in other mining companies that have offset that; for example, Detour Lake gold mine, Lake Shore, Placer Dome and others have had some investment because of the price of gold being what it was a couple of years ago. We were darn lucky, because we have lost, permanently, out of the city of Timmins some couple of thousand jobs, direct and indirect, as a result of closing down Xstrata.

And that’s just but one town. That is across the entire province. We look at the mass exodus of companies that are moving out of Hamilton, that are moving out of Windsor, that are moving out of all kinds of different communities. A lot of those decisions are based on the price of electricity.

We’re saying, by way of this motion, let’s do two things. The first thing: Let’s stop the construction—not cancel existing contracts, I want to be clear. We know the folly of that, because we’re still dealing with that at the gas plant committee, but let’s stop the construction of new, private power deals as a first step.

The second step: Let’s take stock in what we have as far as these contracts. What can we learn from those contracts that’s good and bad, and what do we need to change? Let’s have some scrutiny. The public has the

right to know what is in those contracts so that if any other contracts are ever negotiated again, at least we have a public scrutiny process that puts the light on what people are negotiating. New Democrats believe that should be done within the confines of a public system.

If you look at what Ontario Hydro did prior to the whole taking-apart by Ernie Eves and the acceleration of that happening under the Liberals, we used to be able to deliver power in this province at a rate that was competitive with Manitoba and Quebec, and it was, in fact, lower at some points. We were able to compete and attract those jobs into our community, and people could afford their hydro bills.

We’re saying that this motion would allow us to put a pause, something the government has already said they’re prepared to do as far as new builds at this point. Under their long-term energy plan, which is going to give us a 33% increase in hydro over the next three years and 50-some-odd percent over the next five years, they’ve already said that they want to slow things down. Here’s the motion that will allow you to do that. Let’s stop the new builds as far as anything new on the books, and let’s deal with doing a value-for-money audit on all of the private power deals that are out there so that we can look at how these things are structured. Do they make any sense from the perspective of the ratepayer in the province of Ontario, individual businesses across this province and citizens who have to pay hydro bills?

I think if we do that, we can learn something from that exercise. Then we can be in a position to try to undo some of the damage that the Liberals have caused by way of their energy policy in this province—which has driven jobs out of this province and put people in a position of not being able to afford to pay their hydro bills—and to try to put some sanity back into the system.

I thank you for the time for this debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I’m pleased to join the debate and to discuss the motion offered by my colleague from Timmins—James Bay. I read the motion, and it’s kind of an interesting motion. I’m not exactly sure what a mega deal is. I assume it’s bigger than a deal, and I’m not really sure about how one defines the spectrum of a mini deal, a deal, a big deal and a mega deal. But setting aside the ambiguity of some of that, I know he has, actually, read the long-term energy plan, and it’s an interesting motion because the 2013 long-term energy plan does not propose any new third-party peak power gas-fired generation plants. It’s sort of like saying, “I’d like to offer up this motion because it seems to be in line with what the government is going to do anyway.”

However, I actually do disagree with the notion that we should arbitrarily exclude the private sector from the business of generating power. Why shouldn’t a private sector firm be able to produce and sell rate-regulated power into the grid? It just doesn’t really add up.

He mentions Manitoba and Quebec, and very frankly, it’s not a valid comparison. Both of those provinces have

abundant and cheap falling water, which allows them to generate hydroelectricity very, very inexpensively. However, Ontario's power rates are very much in line with US border states such as Michigan, Pennsylvania and New York. Those states that border us and that have lower hydro rates achieve those lower rates, in the main, by burning dirty coal, and Ontario will not go back to burning coal.

The member asserts that hydro rates will go up by some rather arbitrary figure that I'm not sure where he got. However, what the long-term energy plan has said is that, on average, hydro rates will increase somewhere around 2.5% to 2.8% per year. Just for scale, hydro rates over the past several generations have averaged increases of around 2.5%, so this is not actually going to be that much of a departure.

One wonders in doing this whether this is intended to create some super bureaucracy, rather than encouraging investment in Ontario. I didn't actually get that from the general drift of what he said. It does show, however, that the member has read the long-term energy plan, and if he's read that he'll know that it includes very significant cost savings for both industry and ratepayers.

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The long-term energy plan is built around five key principles: cost-effectiveness, reliability, clean energy, community engagement and putting conservation first. Those are exactly the same principles that I think the member espouses. So what it means is that, by comparison with the last iteration of the long-term energy plan, three years ago in 2010, consumers can expect to pay about \$520 less over the next five years, and about \$3,800 less looking out to 2030. If you're a large industry, such as what the member has discussed, you can expect to pay about \$3 million less in the next five years and about \$11 million less, forecast out to 2030.

It's worth mentioning, although the member kind of danced around it but didn't actually say it, that since being elected in 2003, our government has not sold off any electricity assets that are owned by the province. In fact, during the 2004-06 period of reinvestments, Ontario was able to ensure a very competitive atmosphere to drive down the price for new generation simply because private sector firms were forced to compete for projects to ensure that they were price-competitive for Ontario taxpayers. This makes perfect sense. Where we have our base load generation, it will come from our hydroelectric plants and our nuclear plants, those parts of generation that meet the peak periods in the summer and the peak periods in the winter that involve generators that are not on all the time. For example, a peak power gas-fired generation plant might only be on 5% to 10% of the time. It doesn't really make a lot of sense to tie up a lot of public dollars to be invested in a peak power plant that's only going to be on one twentieth or one tenth of the time, so those things were subcontracted out. It's very simple technology: You burn natural gas, you boil water, you use compressed steam to spin a turbine to generate electricity.

Now, another point that the member, although he sort of danced around it, didn't mention is the stability that the long-term energy plan has proposed for hydro rates over the next—not just the short time, three to five years, but extending out over 20 years. Some of the analysis that we were presented this morning from the Ontario Power Authority shows exactly that, how the impact of even a large change in the present, when spread out over 20 years, amounted to just a very tiny fraction of a cent per kilowatt hour.

Now, Speaker, I understand the motivation of the member, who's actually been a bit of a role model for many of us over the last 10 years. Despite having a lot of time for him and respecting his intelligence, I'm afraid I can't agree with his opinion on this one, and I would urge members, with respect, not to support this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to join the debate today because there's a couple of things that we need to get straight in terms of the essence of this motion. Just to make sure everyone on camera watching right now understands, we're debating an NDP motion that, in essence, suggests putting a stop to new private electricity mega deals. I believe yesterday they were leading into this particular debate this afternoon by posing a question during question period. I feel it's so important, when we're talking about the most critical pillar of our economy, energy, and the cost of electricity that we need to really ensure that we're talking about the facts. It's important for everyone watching today that they understand that the little bit of fearmongering that was tried to be stirred yesterday was misled. According to Scott Miller, a CTV London reporter—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to ask the member for Huron-Bruce to withdraw the unparliamentary comment.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Withdraw.

But I would like to quote the reporter from CTV London that spoke to the fact that there was incorrect information shared yesterday during question period. Essentially, the report read, "The New Democrats were later forced to admit they couldn't support that figure" that they shared, and they admitted that the figures they were touting, in terms of setting up for today's debate, were taken from an old article and it was incorrect. So we need to make sure that when we're discussing very important issues, we do indeed stick to the facts.

When I say that, I would like to share a couple of things with you, Speaker. First of all, it's nice to see that the third party finally seems to be getting anxious and angry about the cost of energy in Ontario, but, despite that, it boggles my mind that they continue to choose to support this corrupt and mismanaged government.

Another thing that we have to talk about is that—I've spoken about it and the Auditor General has supported the fact that time and time again the sky-high energy prices in the province of Ontario are actually a direct result, in part, of the Liberals' failed Green Energy Act.

Yet the third party, for whatever reason, can't seem to resist standing here today and attacking the private sector.

We've got this all upside down and backwards, because the reality is, we need to be looking at how we can prop up the private sector. They are the pulse, they're the heartbeat of our economy. We need to be looking at what we can do to encourage small business to expand and grow, so, ultimately, we have jobs throughout all of Ontario, rural and urban. In order to go forward and return this province to a state of the economic engine of Canada it once was, we need to have all parts of Ontario performing, if you will, on all cylinders.

In talking about all cylinders, just a couple of weeks ago I spoke in this House about the great work of an example, a benchmark, a case model, that could be followed in terms of public-private partnerships. I stood up and talked about Bruce Power. In my riding of Huron-Bruce, which is very rural—and we've lost a lot of manufacturing—we have to celebrate the fact that this private-public partnership is a significant job provider and part of the economic engine in my area that I call home.

Bruce Power is a fantastic place to work, and it was recognized for having one of the most respected corporate cultures in Canada. They have been a strong, responsible member of the corporate community, and they also have been a major provider of affordable, reliable baseload energy for the entire province of Ontario.

As we have heard many times in this House, Speaker, our economy is in desperate shape as a result of a decade of mismanagement. But we cannot be entertaining motions like today's coming from the NDP that would stifle and handcuff the ingenuity and the entrepreneurial spirit of our private sector.

I look forward to additional comments from my colleague from Nepean-Carleton.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to add my two cents to the debate that the member from Timmins-James Bay brought forward. His motion is quite simple. The first one is to take a pause so that you can look at what is happening. It would be not doing our job if we did not acknowledge that in many parts of our province there are a lot of people who are unhappy with some of the deals that have been signed for private electricity. Whether you look at all of the communities that are opposed to solar or wind or hydroelectricity, at the end of the day, we all agree that we need energy.

Everybody agrees that there is room and a place for renewable energy, but we have to take into account the human factor. The human factor is that, for a lot of those communities, they are not happy. What harm is there in giving them reassurance that we will have an independent third party look at those deals and reassure them that the deal is a good deal for the people of Ontario, it is a good deal for them too? That, to me, would go a long way toward bringing reassurance to people.

Right now, we don't know—as the member has said, those deals, because they are with the private sector, are

completely shielded from oversight. We don't know what's in it. We're all human beings, Mr. Speaker. When we don't know, we always think of the worst. Let's clear the air on this issue. Nobody said that something bad will come out; nobody said that we will throw this all out and we will stop ingenuity and we will stop things from happening—far be it from us. What we want is we want to clear the air. Let an independent third party look at those deals and reassure the people of Ontario that those are good deals. If they are not, maybe there are lessons to be learned as we move forward so that we make sure that our electricity prices remain affordable.

1520

We have all been receiving emails, letters and phone calls since the long-term energy plan came out, and already people are reaching out to their MPP. They're reaching out with stories where they cannot see a 33% increase in their hydro bills being something that they're able to support. They cannot see a 40% increase in the next five years as something that their income is going to be able to afford.

So how do we help to clear the air? We take a little pause on the new one. We don't tear up any contracts—NDPers don't do this; we respect the existing contracts. We just say, "No new ones until we have an opportunity to reassure the good people of Ontario that the deals that are in there now are good and they cannot be made any better." If we find out a way to make them better, don't we all win? Don't we all win?

Transparency is a wonderful thing. On all sides of the House, people talk about the importance of having transparency. Some of those deals deal with a lot of money. The member used "mega deals," well, because we're talking about mega bucks. We're talking about lots of taxpayers' money and lots of ratepayers' money that are going to be paying to support those private deals.

There are a lot of people who are unhappy. Why not give them a chance? We are there to listen to the people who have elected us. Why not give them a chance to be heard? Give them a chance to have an independent third party tell them, "You know what? This is a good deal."

To me, the private sector has everything to gain in doing this. The private sector may come out on top and say, "Look, we are able to deliver things cheaper, on budget," and it could be an opportunity for them to shine. We don't know what the end results will be, but what we do know is that as long as you keep it as a mystery—a deal where a lot of money gets exchanged but you don't know who's making what and if you're the sucker in that deal or if you're the winner in that deal—then human nature will take over and we will doubt it. The motion will clear the air.

The motion will bring a little bit of sunshine and sunlight onto those deals. It may very well come out a winner: "Please continue 100 miles an hour." It could very well be: "Doing pretty good, but here are some tweaks." Or it could not be; we don't know until it's done. But as long as we don't know, people will continue to be fearful, and we're not doing any service to the

people who brought us here by ignoring the fact that there are a lot of people who are unhappy.

The energy critic will be able to explain the finer parts—

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Details.

M^{me} France Gélinas:—and details of this bill way better than me, but I wanted to put in my two cents as the representative for Nickel Belt, where there are people who are not happy, where there are people who cannot pay their bill and who need to be heard. This is an opportunity for us to do what we are elected to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure to rise to debate energy policy in this chamber today. I want to commend my colleague from Timmins-James Bay for bringing forward this motion.

Though I don't think we necessarily agree on this, he and I have spent a lot of time in the past couple of months in the gas plants committee. I think the one desire that he and I do share is for more and greater accountability with respect to energy planning in this province, because there seems to have been a lack of it in the past decade. That, I think, is where we depart because we certainly have our views on how we can move forward and he has his. I commend him for putting his ideas down for debate today, but I won't be accepting the premise on which he wants to move forward.

I think the problem is the key issue with this motion is that the government's decisions are the ones that are causing higher energy rates in Ontario. It's not businesses and private sector companies, like Bruce nuclear or others across the province. It is a result of this Liberal government and their decision-making capabilities—or inabilities perhaps is probably the more appropriate term.

I just look, for example, at next week. We will be faced with another auditor's report. It will deal with the OPG. They've been audited, and I quote from the AG report summary: "... challenges in recent years in improving its operational efficiency and reducing its operating costs, especially labour costs." So we will get a sneak peek of that, probably on Tuesday morning, and then we'll all have an opportunity to look at that in more depth.

But I think, Speaker, that is a very key issue for us. Why would we want to give more power and authority to crown corporations at this point in time, given the mess that we have seen with the OPA and others with respect to those cancelled gas plants? It's very clear that it is this Liberal government that is superseding those agencies that they have traditionally set up to be arm's-length. They have superseded their authority, they have interfered with their authority, and that is why our energy rates are high.

So I would question that once again, why we'd give more power and authority to those public companies at a time when we would want to make it harsher for private companies. I think that's an important distinction. One of the other things that I do fully support is this private sector competition that actually starts to keep costs low because there is competition and people want to—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Some competition. Have you seen the FIT program?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I didn't interrupt your comments, and I would ask that you not interrupt mine. I'm actually being quite respectful of your point of view. But that said, I do have a philosophical difference in terms of how we treat the private sector and the public sector. It is different than theirs.

So I'm going to go back. Whether it's cancellation of the power plants or something else that has been quite important to many of us in the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party, and that is that in our communities we are actually fighting wind and solar developments at a high, subsidized price by this Liberal government—in fact, we put forward a motion in the public accounts committee asking that the government send the Auditor General in to look at those FIT contracts to determine how much of the public's money is going to subsidize this in the long run and how that impacts the rate base. We're going to continue to pursue that.

The other initiative that we took on today—and we did actually have the support of the third party, which I do appreciate—is to get all of the documents from the cabinet, from the Premier, from the ministers and from the OPA with respect to the cancellation of the two gas plants in Mississauga and Oakville and how that impacts the Ontario long-term energy plan, as well as the rate base for ratepayers here in the province of Ontario. We think that's pretty important because it's pretty clear this Liberal government has the reverse Midas touch. They have the reverse Midas touch: Everything this government touches with respect to energy policy turns to garbage instead of gold.

Speaker, it's not just in energy policy. I look at Ornge, I look at eHealth, I look at Cancer Care Ontario—

Mr. Rob Leone: Pan Am.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Pan Am is another perfect example of this government. Again, if we are going to force private companies to be dealt with in terms of more accountability measures, then I think it would be more prudent for the Ontario government to start looking internally, at some of its own areas. I think there should be less government in the sector, not more government in the sector. I think we have to figure out a way to have lower hydro rates, not higher hydro rates. I think we have to find a way for more reliable sources of power, not less reliable sources of power, like wind and solar, that we're actually heavily subsidizing.

So I think this government—again, I'm not going to attack the New Democrats. They have a position, and I respect that. I don't agree with it. We have our position, which I think is based on solid fundamentals. We've had a plan for two years. We have been running on that plan. But I look at this Liberal government and they've put forward in the past two, three years a long-term energy plan that is effectively a short-term energy plan, that's not effectively even worth the paper it's written on. Speaker, I'll tell you why.

Two days ago, when I asked in this House what the impact on the rate base would be with the cancellation of

the gas plants as it pertained to the LTEP, the minister stood up and he said it's not even in there. Then, at the end of question period, after one of his aides in the back decided to say, "Hey, hey, ho, ho, let's just be careful," he goes, "It is there. It is there now." So it magically appeared.

1530

The problem is, the minister himself doesn't even understand his own long-term energy plan, so it's no wonder that my colleagues in the New Democratic Party want to put forward this motion. It's no wonder that our party has put forward a white paper. It's no wonder that the two of our parties, despite I think some differences in how we would proceed, joined together today to say, "Hey, we need some more documents out of these guys with respect to the long-term energy plan and what the impact is going to be on rates." It's no wonder we've done that, Speaker, because these guys have left the public's rate base and the power system in Ontario in a complete and utter basket case of a mess, and we can't continue to do this.

We have said very clearly that we have a long-term energy plan. It's called Paths to Prosperity: Affordable Energy. We've got a number of paths, 13 in total, that talk about the way that we can move forward here in Ontario. It is a vast set of policies that are very different than where the current Liberal government would take us, and I believe that Tim Hudak is the best person to put forward that plan, the best person to lead that plan and the best person to restore affordable energy rates here in the province of Ontario.

While I will not be supporting this motion, I do congratulate my colleague from Timmins—James Bay for at least thinking about accountability in the energy sector when this Liberal government isn't.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, the reason we're debating this today is because rising electricity prices in Ontario are having a huge impact on families, on businesses and on employment. What we are seeing in Ontario today is really the logical outcome of a program of privatizing the energy system, increasing the costs and overbuilding the system to the advantage of a number of gas-generating companies. We are dealing with consequences of a trajectory on policy that we've seen since the late 1990s with Mike Harris, through Dalton McGuinty to today.

If we, in fact, look at our history, this province—and I've said this in the House before—built its industrial base on renewable power, non-profit power. Those two items together made a huge difference to Ontario's destiny. It allowed us to build industry in southwestern Ontario, and it allowed us to build industry in the north because people who were investing and people who were working had access to power they weren't being gouged for. They were being charged the cost of that power, and in this province, historically we were able to deliver affordable power.

Speaker, many have said in the last decade that the reason we needed to go to privately owned power was to eliminate risk, transfer risk from the public to private investors. Well, first of all, that is a false concept, because in reality, if a company is providing 20% or 25% of a jurisdiction's power, if that company goes under, the government has got to step in to make sure the power is still there. At the beginning of this century, 2002, in Britain, British Energy went bankrupt. It was an atomic-based generating company. It could no longer compete on price, but at the same time, it provided 20% of the power in the UK. The government had no choice. It had to put in billions of dollars in order to ensure that the power continued to flow. You can't say that we're not going to have power for 20% of the country. Governments have to step in. We cannot leave this risk behind.

Speaker, when you're talking about the oxygen line for an advanced industrial society, you don't get to play around. Our experience in Ontario was that when the Conservatives moved to privatize, they brought a whole bunch of new costs into the system. Frankly, we looked at huge fluctuations and spikes in cost in 2002-03, forcing the Conservative government at the time to intervene and pour money in to keep the cost of electricity down.

The movement of Bruce nuclear off the books of Ontario Power Generation and into the hands of Bruce Power meant that not only did we still get stuck with the risk of reactors, but, frankly, the Bruce power station now earns profits, according to their 2010 annual report, in the range of \$500 million a year. That was before the two most recent reactors came online.

In 1995, we weren't paying that \$500-million-plus in profit to a company. That money was staying in the pockets of Ontarians, in the pockets of companies in this province. We got stuck with extra costs.

I've had the opportunity, sitting on the committee inquiring into the gas plants, to look at what scared power planners in this province when they realized that a plant was going to be moved and we would get stuck with the bill. Having to pay for lost profits was a huge fear.

So, if a government makes a mistake—and, frankly, they did in those cases, and we warned them about it—the cost of moving becomes far larger, because you have to pay for two decades of profits. It makes it very difficult to correct a mistake. We take on the risk, we assume new risks in case a mistake has to be corrected, and we also see that, because it is so expensive to pay these companies, they spend a fortune on interest. The Mississauga power plant was paying 14% interest and a 60% interest penalty fee.

My colleague from Timmins—James Bay has brought forward a very useful motion. Assess the impact of private power contracts, assess the value of them and, frankly, let the people of this province see what has been driving these very big rate increases and what we gave up when we decided to privatize the system. This has been an ongoing process—not a reducing process, an ongoing process.

Speaker, I urge everyone to vote for the motion of my colleague the member from Timmins—James Bay.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's been a fascinating debate, and I want to commend all my colleagues for their thoughtful intervention. My friend from Toronto—Danforth—I agree with a great deal of what he said, but I want to go back to the member for Nepean—Carleton, because I haven't found logic in the Conservative position.

I'd like, maybe, if they had some chance to explain to me their position, because the member for Toronto—Danforth was quite right. I became a very great student of the Mike Harris privatization. I was highly motivated to become a student of that, because while this privatization was going on in Ontario, I had gotten elected mayor of Winnipeg. The relationship between Manitoba and Ontario is like the relationship between Canada and the United States. We spend a lot of time watching what's going on in Ontario, because it's on our 6 o'clock news, and smaller provinces rarely permeate the 6 o'clock news. I have to phone friends in Winnipeg to find out what's going on; when I'm back in Winnipeg, I can keep up pretty easily.

But I was in the middle of consolidating and selling a municipal hydro utility that had dams and generation, negotiating with Gary Doer, who was the Premier at the time, to create basically a super public power corporation. There are upsides and downsides to that, but there were two things that I learned in that process, and this is where I agree with the New Democrats.

There are two things you have to look at. One is, what risk is being created, who is allocating it, and are you getting value for money in that risk? It was an interesting kind of process, because it was paralleled here in Ontario.

The second one is that there is an inherent value that comes with the security of a public asset, because it's secured by the people, and you're controlling a pricing system and protecting the security of supply, which is a very positive thing about public utilities. I won't repeat all the details, except to say "ditto" to my friend.

It was so obvious, through all of the energy transactions, that what Ontario was doing at that time was a colossal disaster in the making, because what everyone across the country was telling the Harris government was that the risk of the public asset was hugely at value through privatization. You were basically going to create a stranded debt or write down the value of the asset. So this \$21-billion liability became very real very quickly, which is now about \$8 billion.

1540

Essentially that decision to privatize wrecked the public sector system and wrecked the energy system in Ontario. Anything that has happened since has been different efforts, depending on different ideological perspectives, to try and remedy what was a colossal, I think, stupid decision where we lost control of the assets. Part of the challenge in Manitoba has been—

Interjection: They deregulated it.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Deregulated. Thank you. Sorry; that's a better word for it. Thank you very much.

We did not deregulate, so some of this language is new because most of our looks at it said, "You shouldn't privatize and you shouldn't do it on this kind of scale." We have a system now that's about 55% public and about 45% private right now.

The advantage of a private system that we inherited as a government, with huge debts, with devalued assets and deregulated, was the advantage, and the problem that Manitoba has had—and I think my friend Greg Selinger would tell you it's a problem with an entirely public system—is it's very hard to create private companies and diversify if you're trying to create something like we did here with the Green Energy Act. Not too many people have done that in the North American economy, and we've had some great successes and some failures with that. But there is a substantive green energy job market, and part of that is because of the interface of private sector providers and suppliers, and trying to create an ecology of that, which was part of the solution I think to that.

When I was chairing the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, we did a comprehensive study of the energy architecture of that. If you want to read it, and it was written by Conservatives, Liberals—Audrey McLaughlin—New Democrats—it was quite an interesting mix of us on that, which was really looking at the architecture, particularly of Ontario's nuclear system which is really what is generating our cost. Nuclear, let's be quite frank about it, is almost singularly the most expensive source of energy. It's green, in the sense that it doesn't contribute to climate change, which is important. Closing our coal plants was important, and those were important things.

But it's interesting to me, that we're trying to move forward. What I like about the long-term energy plan is it is looking at the reality of what we have, which is a hybrid system. What we have tried to do and why I have some challenges with this motion is because it's a bit like looking through the rear-view mirror. Value-for-money systems that we now have in government and that Infrastructure Ontario does are the best in the world. They look at two things, which is the value of the asset and the reality of the risk, and can it be allocated.

When deregulation had happened and decisions were made about privatization, I think if we had used that risk profile, I don't think we would have privatized, because I don't think today's techniques would have supported the decisions of that previous government. If you want to run the value-for-money system we now have, I don't think this motion is necessary. I think it's there, and it's now used in everything that we do, and we're going to make some decisions that are going to repatriate decisions that were previously made to do things through a private partnership and look at other things, because I think there has to be a pragmatic lens.

I give my friend from Timmins—James Bay some great credit because I think the foundation of a rational

analysis is there. But I don't think this is a necessary motion, and I think we have to try and work with the benefits of the hybrid system we've inherited.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Timmins–James Bay, you have two minutes.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, but just two minutes, Mr. Speaker? How can I do that?

I want to thank everybody for participating in the debate. I just would say the following, that clearly what the public wants is transparency in the electricity system. What we have is a system where, if you're OPG and you have public assets, there is transparency. If you're in the private sector and you sign a private power deal with the OPA, it's not transparent, and a good example of that is what happened with the gas plants.

We need to have transparency in the system, and what this motion calls for is to say that those contracts that are signed—don't go out and cancel them. We know what the cost of that would be; it'd be pretty astronomical. But at the very least, the public needs to know what the actual cost of those particular plants is and what the deal that they got in order to build and operate them has been. Because we need to learn from those deals so that we don't end up repeating what has been done in the past that has driven up hydro costs.

The public needs to have transparency, and that's what this is all about. And again, I'll quote my good friend, Brian Mulroney. Brian Mulroney said, "You know, there needs to be a level playing field," and I agree with him. We need a level playing field when it comes to what OPG is doing—Ontario Power Generation—when it comes to whatever they're doing when it comes to refurbishing, rebuilding or building brand new, and what the private sector is doing on the other side. It makes no sense, in this province or anywhere, for us to have a system that says, "Here are the transparency rules for public power and here are the transparency rules for private power." In other words, there's none.

We're saying level that playing field. Make it so that the rules are the same so that the public has a right to know what goes into those contracts and make sure that when you do that, it puts the onus on people to make sure they negotiate a private power deal in a way that makes some sense. As New Democrats, we believe that the new builds should be public. We've never hidden that. We've always said that up front. I think history will prove that we were right when you look at what all has happened.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. We'll take the vote at the end of regular business.

RYAN'S LAW (ENSURING
ASTHMA FRIENDLY SCHOOLS), 2013
LOI RYAN DE 2013 POUR ASSURER
LA CRÉATION D'ÉCOLES
ATTENTIVES À L'ASTHME

Mr. Yurek moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 135, An Act to protect pupils with asthma / Projet de loi 135, Loi protégeant les élèves asthmatiques.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation. Mr. Yurek.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you, Speaker. I stand today and I'm proud to bring forth my second private member's bill since I've been elected to this Legislature. Really, the other name for this bill is Ryan's Law. It's basically in memory of Ryan Gibbons, a young boy, 12 years old, in my riding. Last year, Ryan got up like every 12-year-old boy, got ready for school and headed out. His mom said, "Goodbye, see you after school," and Ryan headed off to school. He had music class, in which he played the trombone. He had a little bit of a cold coming on and he went outside for recess at his nutritional break.

During recess, the boys were playing soccer and he started not feeling too well so he thought he'd better head into the school, most likely, obviously, to go get his puffer, for Ryan had asthma.

Unfortunately, Ryan didn't even make it to the office and, unfortunately, he didn't make it home that night. His mum, Sandra, is here today. We thank you very much for coming. It's just not the right order of things to happen in this life. The kids aren't supposed to go before the parents.

So we're here and we can do something good for Ontarians—I'll be okay in a second; it's kind of touching. We can do something good for Ontarians in this province if we take care of our kids. If it's something just as minor as fixing the policy and standardizing it across this province, we can and should do that here today. I thank you, Sandra, for your courage in coming forward. You're an advocate for your son and you're an advocate for all the kids in our school system today.

I'd also like to thank the Lung Association for their ongoing drive to ensure we have an asthma strategy for this province. Today we have Sherry Zarins and Andrea Stevens-Lavigne here today. Thank you very much for coming forward and supporting us today through this process and continuing to support us as we carry on. I'd also like to thank Speaker Dave Levac, who was instrumental in helping point us in the right direction in developing this bill. Speaker Levac was the one who brought forward Sabrina's Law to help our children with anaphylactic situations in our schools.

I'd also like to take this time to thank the teachers in our school system who now do what they need to do to keep our kids with asthma safe and keep all our children safe. I'm going to do a shout-out to my daughter's teacher. She's in grade 4 this year. I want to thank Mrs. Keogh, her JK teacher; Mrs. L'Heureux, her SK teacher—she wasn't in the FDK system at the time; Mrs. Burgess, her grade 1 teacher; Mrs. Marcinkiewicz, who taught her grade 2 and, because she liked Maggie so much, she got her for grade 3. Currently my daughter is being taught by Mr. Brock Austin, who taught me grade 8. I thank them very much for keeping my daughter safe, teaching her well and teaching her how to be a good person.

I'd also want to do a shout-out to Mrs. Walt. If anybody who's a parent wants to know the way to get things done in the schools it's to become best friends with the secretary. They run the world, and I tell you, Mrs. Walt takes care of every single kid who comes through that door.

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Asthma affects as many as one in five children. That's quite an amount when you think about it, when you go across the province. Asthma and its treatment has evolved over the last few years. Kids before were unable to participate in certain situations at school or participate in sports because asthma was a problem. But medical technology has come forward since the—I've been a pharmacist, I don't know, since 1995. I'm done doing math; I'm now an MPP. But, however—

Interjection: Eighteen years.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Eighteen years. I've seen the progression of medications become available. Inhaled steroids have improved in effectiveness. There are fewer side effects along with them. They're lasting 12 hours a day. So, basically, kids who are on steroid inhalers don't need to take them at school. They take them in the morning and take them at night. The fast-acting medications have improved. They've come out with new forms. The Turbuhaler—you don't even have to press the button anymore. You have to have strong breath to inhale it.

So treatment has improved. It has allowed kids to become more involved in our schools. Unfortunately, and it's nobody's fault, our policy hasn't come forward. I think this is where we need to go forward: Change the policy so that it's standard across the province, so that kids in Timmins are having the same policy as the kids in London, who are going to have the same policy as kids in Windsor, and that is a safe school for our kids with asthma.

The thing I have to let people know who maybe are concerned that puffers are going to be used regularly and routinely—I tell you, if a child is accurately prescribed and treated on their medication, the use of inhalers is minimal. It's not going to be a daily occurrence. It might be twice a week or once a week. If they're bad, if they're catching a cold, sure, they might have to use it a few times a day. However, typically it's not going to be a daily usage.

The one thing out of this bill that I really want to press forward is that puffers need to be on the student. I think, across the province, any parent you talk to, they will agree with me that the puffer needs to be in their pocket. It's not only in the classroom that they might have an asthma attack, or in gym class; what happened with poor Ryan out in the schoolyard might occur.

Another aspect of having this puffer in their pocket is if they're a bus student. What happens if they're on the bus heading home? If the policy of the school is that the puffer is locked in the office, they're not going to have it on them. Or what happens if they're walking home? Many of our kids do walk home. If they're bringing on a cold or that, what do they do if they undergo an asthma

attack? If they're allowed to have their puffer in their pocket, or in their bag or what have you, it will be on them. They know what to do when they get that tight feeling in their chest.

I think, in this day and age, if a family goes out to Canada's Wonderland, that puffer is on them. If your son or daughter is outside playing, the puffer is on him. There's no reason at all why that puffer can't be on them when they're at school.

My bill does aim to protect children with asthma because it's going to create a standardized guideline that school boards will adhere to when devising asthma protocol. I'll go over my four points that will come up though what the bill is trying to come out with:

- strategies to reduce the risk of exposure to asthma triggers in the classroom;

- a communication plan for the dissemination of information on asthma to parents, pupils and employees;

- regular training on recognizing and managing asthma for all employees that interact with students with asthma on a regular basis; and, as I said before,

- require schools to allow children to carry their reliever puffers at all times, provided they do have their doctor's permission.

The other thing that this bill will bring forward is, the principal will develop a file in conjunction with their family physician that has emergency procedures for that student and directions on where the spare medication is stored. I think we do have to come forward that there should be a spare puffer, and I agree that that one should be somewhere safe and stored away so that is accessible in case the puffer runs out, the puffer breaks or the student loses it. That can all happen.

This bill is another tool that we're giving to the Ministry of Education to help protect our students. Speaker Levac brought forth Sabrina's Law to take care of anaphylaxis with students. This law, Ryan's Law, is going to take care of our students with asthma. I hope the ministry will accept and use this tool.

But I would call for the ministry to come forward with a comprehensive bill that includes not only asthma and anaphylaxis but diabetes and epilepsy. We've had other people commenting through me that these are their other concerns. Put it together all as one bill. I'm pretty sure you would get support across all three parties.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Some schools are doing it already.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Yes, that's a good point. Some schools are doing it. Again, that's just the process of standardizing to ensure that students who are getting an excellent education in Ottawa have excellent education in Thunder Bay, at the same time that those students who have asthma are treated the same across the board, so that our students can continue to enjoy gym class, can continue to enjoy recess.

Mr. Rob Leone: Kids can be kids.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Kids can be kids; that's a good point.

If kids' asthma is under control and there's good monitoring and education going on, there's no reason

why their absenteeism shouldn't decrease over time and keep them out of school. When they go on school trips, that puffer is going to be in their pocket in case they take their trip to the Toronto Zoo or what have you. You never know what's going to spark up an asthma attack. As I said, there are many colds and flus in the school system, and this is just a safeguard.

I think it will make teachers at ease in their school day to know that they know all they can know to help that student in case of an asthma attack. There is a procedure in place to help that student out, and they know that student knows what to do when they're feeling the asthma coming along. They can just ensure that that student gets the opportunity to use their puffer. And if they need extra help, the teacher knows what to do at the next step, which would involve the staff in ensuring the student is taken care of.

In my final few minutes here, again, I want to thank the Lung Association for coming out today. You've been an awesome support for us. Sandra and family, I really appreciate working with you. We're going to do what we can to pass this bill today.

I look forward to the debate that's going to come forward, because I think there can be some good discussion heading out. I've had some good letters and emails about what people want to talk about when it hits committee, and I hope it does hit committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It is obviously an honour and a privilege to stand in this House and discuss an important piece of legislation. New Democrats are proud to support the second reading of bill—we will be supporting this bill as it moves forward and get it to committee.

As the former president of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, I did want to talk broadly about the impact of a piece of legislation like this. It is very true that school boards and individual schools have been adapting to a number of health issues that face our students each and every day. If you were to walk into most schools in the province of Ontario today, you would see a number of pictures of students in the office and a list of what medications they are on and what issues they face. You will also see that sometimes there are some parental restrictions with those children. There is a concerted effort, I think, on the part of school boards across this province to ensure the safety of our students. I do believe that this has come about through progressive pieces of legislation like this.

I do want to thank the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London, and I certainly want to thank Ryan's mother and family for being here to support this piece of legislation, because this is actually how progressive change happens. A privilege that we have as legislators in the province of Ontario is that we have the opportunity to raise the awareness on certain issues, to give profile to issues that are currently not always understood—or the impact of those illnesses, in this case, that are not fully understood.

I think that what underpins this entire debate, or what should underpin this debate, is that when we as parents—because I'm a parent of a 15-year-old and a 12-year-old—send our children off to school, we are transferring a level of trust, if you will, to that school. A part of transferring trust is ensuring that the school has all the information that they need and that we, as parents, have conveyed all the information that we need to share with the school. What Bill 135 sort of establishes is a common understanding, and I think that that is so important for that transfer of trust, if you will. The school obviously needs to have a full understanding of the health needs of those children who are entering their doors. Parents need to understand what sort of services their children will have as they enter those doors of the school.

I do believe that the public education system on the whole in the province is genuinely moving to a perspective on education which incorporates the whole child. I know at the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, we were really pushing this ministry to adapt to that concept, which is: You consider the mental health needs; you consider the physical needs; you consider some of the illnesses.

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You make accommodations for those children with special needs, and you make sure that those children who are entering your school at the beginning of the day are healthy and enriched and better for the knowledge they accumulated during the day as they go back home. That is really about relationship building in education, and many boards across the province have come to understand this.

What Bill 135 establishes, though, is truly a framework, an understanding and a clear establishment of the facts. I do think, though, as it gets through second reading, like any piece of legislation, there will be opportunities to make it stronger. Certainly, our understanding is that this bill didn't have as much input as it could have had from the very people who will be on the front lines: the elementary teacher federation. They need to have in place everything that they need to ensure that they will be delivering the best kind of health intervention, if needed.

While we understand that ETFO is supportive of this bill, as of course they would be—actually, OSSTF was here today, and we talked about this bill when they came to meet with me as well. Their only concern is that they have in place the resources they need to ensure that student safety is paramount. While we understand that ETFO is supportive of this bill and supports healthy work and learning places, there may be specific comments that I think could perhaps strengthen this as it goes forward.

There are, of course, issues that would benefit through a thorough discussion in committee, as there always are. Some people in this House may not fully realize that medical interventions are becoming more commonplace in our schools. Disturbingly—and this may be something that will come up through committee—there is also an affordability aspect. Not all students in our schools in the province of Ontario have the resources to have the drugs

they actually need, and this places a whole new level of stress and tension on what should be a very positive and proactive learning environment.

I actually applaud the member for bringing forward this piece of legislation, because it also gives us the opportunity to talk about the environmental impact, which has negatively impacted children greatly in the province of Ontario, and that is around air quality and those environmental illnesses that have become more and more prevalent in the province.

I do think it is incumbent on us as legislators to increase our understanding to ensure, of course, that we bring a new level of compassion into the system in every circumstance with every student and every child.

Of course, we will be supporting this private member's bill. We look forward to it getting to the committee level, where we hope to ensure that, going forward, it's as strong as it can be, because that is our shared responsibility in this place.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to join the debate on Bill 135, Ryan's Law, which has been tabled by the member from Elgin—Middlesex—London.

I'd like to begin by saying to Ryan's family that certainly our sympathy and our hearts go out to you for the experience you've had, and thank you for your advocacy on behalf of children with asthma.

I've certainly not had that experience in my family, but when I was a child, one of my best friends had very severe asthma. It was in the days before pharmacists dispensed puffers, and he had a number of very serious episodes. In those days, you ended up in an iron lung or an oxygen tent.

I've had some history with families that had really serious experiences with asthma, so I've got a little bit of an understanding of how you can go from a child who's running around on the playground and joining in with everybody else—I actually have a scar over one eyebrow from, I don't know, a seventh or eighth birthday party. I got stepped on at the skating rink, the point being that he was out there skating around with everybody else, but then a couple of weeks later he would be in very serious distress. So certainly we need to take very seriously the problem of children who have asthma and other diseases that are episodic and potentially life-threatening.

Bill 135 has been modeled—the member mentioned the assistance from the Speaker, because it was the Speaker who originally brought us Sabrina's Law, which had to do with anaphylaxis and which did get passed here and came into effect. What Sabrina's Law requires and what Bill 135 would require is a communication plan, an individual pupil plan, a file for each pupil with asthma, obligations for parents to keep the information up to date, and an immunity clause for persons acting in good faith. People may think that's rather a strange thing, but one of the concerns that staff in schools have is that they're not medical. They don't have the knowledge to be medical caregivers, and there's always the concern that if they

step in as good Samaritans, as it were, to work with a student who is in distress, they may not get it exactly right medically because they are not medical practitioners. That indemnity is actually a very important piece of the puzzle. So there are a number of things here in the bill that are modeled on the previous bill that we have.

Just to give a bit of information to people about some of the things that have been going on in the government around the whole issue of kids with asthma, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, working with the Public Health School Asthma Program, provided comprehensive asthma support, and that includes policy development, staff in-service, parent awareness, knowledge-building events and help with students to self-manage their asthma. They partnered four health units with their coterminous school boards. That pilot took place in Durham region, Halton region, Hamilton and Sudbury in the public health and school boards in those areas. So we've got some learning and some experience from those pilots that the Ministry of Health conducted around managing this in schools.

We also have had a school-based program that was developed by the Ontario Lung Association, which has been recognized here today, and the Ontario Physical and Health Education Association, which I'll talk about as OPHEA and which developed a guide called 7 Simple Steps to Make Schools Asthma-Friendly. Its purpose is to help principals and teachers recognize and respond to the needs of children with asthma. That guide was released on May 7 of this year, so last spring, and it is now available for schools, principals and teachers, really, all over Ontario to get some guidance. The guide is based, actually, on the previous research that I mentioned by those health units and their experience, and it recommends that all schools establish a process to identify students with asthma. The member from Kitchener—Waterloo talked about the work that schools often do in identifying students with asthma and other health risks so that school staff know who they are.

Ensuring that students have easy access to their prescribed inhaler, or "puffer," as we tend to refer to it—at this point I'm really going back to my experience as a trustee and how important it is, once a child is old enough to manage the puffer—or, in the case of anaphylaxis, old enough to manage the EpiPen—that the student be able to have the puffer, the EpiPen or whatever it is—the medication for some other diseases—on their person, because when we've had really tragic circumstances, it often is the case that, whatever happened, the EpiPen or the puffer wasn't with the child. There really does seem to be good evidence that, as soon as the child is able to manage their own medication, it's important that they have the puffer or the EpiPen on their person. Staff should know how to recognize and manage worsening symptoms and asthma attacks.

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There's some really good work that has been done in the area of asthma. The concern that I would have is that we have a bill that is anaphylaxis-specific. We have a bill

now here that is asthma-specific. We've had bills tabled previously, I think, that were diabetes-specific. We've had bills that were specific to a variety of diseases, and we would be a little concerned that what we maybe really need is an umbrella bill that carries a variety of things instead of one at a time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I want to commend my colleague from Elgin–Middlesex–London for this asthma bill. It is difficult to put in words anything that would make sense to young Ryan Gibbons's mom, Sandra. Sandra has done a beautiful job transforming her pain into action so that tragic incidents like Ryan's can be reduced—ideally, eliminated.

My assistant's son is a normal eight-year-old boy. He plays sports and gets dirty. He's also asthmatic. His mom says that when he declines, people don't often understand the urgency or the seriousness of the episode or the attack. Ryan's Law will hopefully change this so that not only teachers and principals but all support staff, parents and anyone on school property can have a better understanding of this lung disorder.

I'll pick up on what the minister just indicated: Let's also look at revisiting peanut allergies, epilepsy and diabetes. In May 2005, the Ontario government passed Bill 3, to protect anaphylactic pupils, brought forward by the member for Brant. Sabrina's Law, in honour of Sabrina Shannon, requires every school board to establish and maintain a policy and requires principals to develop individual plans for pupils at risk. I understand that was the first legislation in the world to protect children with these kinds of life-threatening allergies. We have to take this further. I'd like to see this government pass legislation that would pull it all together—allergies, asthma, epilepsy and diabetes—rather than this piecemeal, almost reactive approach.

Schoolchildren with epilepsy often require Ativan. I recently received an email informing me that there are still families who struggle to get their school board to administer Ativan to epileptic children. In my family, we went through this a number of years ago. Thank God for the school secretary; she stepped up to the plate for our family. Ativan is a potentially life-saving drug.

Similarly, the Canadian Diabetes Association—I read this in a backgrounder—states that it should not matter where you go to school, but for children with type 1 diabetes, it does. Except for New Brunswick's education policy 704, there really are no provincial policies or regulations requiring school boards or schools to accommodate or protect students with diabetes. Again, we're back to that patchwork approach, varying standards of care, gaps in care. It varies from school board to school board, and even from school to school within the same board.

In closing, I'm asking this House to support this bill. Let's work together and include as many other issues and ailments in this bill, within a piece of government legislation, so that we can protect as many children as possible.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I want to start off by saying, on behalf of Andrea Horwath and the entire New Democratic Party, that our prayers and our love go out to you and to Ryan's family and to Sandra.

There's nothing worse—I can't imagine anything worse than what you've gone through, and the fact that you are here, turning that tragedy into something positive, is nothing short of amazing, and we commend you. So I want to say thank you to you.

Of course, as you've heard, we are going to support this bill. There's no question about that. If I say anything about it, it's really only to strengthen it, to make sure that if it goes to committee and that amendments are made, it becomes a stronger, more workable bill.

Sam Hammond, who is the president of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, sent a letter around this bill. One of his concerns—and I want to voice this concern, because it is a real concern. You heard it, I think, expressed by the Minister of Education. It's certainly ours as well. There's just a general concern about all of the medical conditions that many of our students face, and teachers' ability and education workers' ability to handle them.

Let's put this in context: We are in a school board time, a school time, an educational system time, where the old Harris funding formula is still in place, where our schools are chronically underfunded; where there aren't enough adults in the classrooms, in the school yards, in the lunchrooms. There is not the same number that there was at one time. I have children in their 30s. When they went to school, there were a lot more adults in the school system than there are now. Those adult eyes—trained eyes, we hope, in light of this bill—are absolutely necessary.

I also have within my jurisdiction a school, Parkdale public school—I give them a shout-out—where a horrific situation happened. Katelynn Sampson, a young woman, was killed by her foster family. When the school guidance counsellor phoned her home, they were told, "She's fine." She was part First Nations: "She's back on the reserve."

There was a time when you would send someone out to that home, when we had that kind of staffing that someone could follow up if a child didn't come to school. Those people aren't there anymore. They're not there anymore. We can't follow up the way we once could.

This speaks to a deficit in our system—not to mention the state of the school buildings. Now, depending on where you live—certainly, in my riding, these are not the same school buildings my children went to. Many of them have capital deficits that they've had for a long time. They're not in good shape. The air quality is not good. Repairs need to be made. Again, this is not the ideal surrounding for a child with a medical condition, who's asthmatic. My son had asthma when he grew up—not nearly as serious as some children. He had friends—but again the rates were much lower then, too.

Again, more adult supervision, more funding generally into the school—that will really buttress and make stronger the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London’s bill. I want to give him kudos, because this is exactly what we should be doing here, this kind of bill. Our hope in the New Democratic Party is simply to make it as strong and workable as possible.

When you have overworked teachers, not enough education assistants, not enough guidance counsellors or special ed teachers or programs, not enough capital funding into the schools, larger-than-desirable classrooms, the idea of adding something else into a teacher’s demands, to again put into place any medical program, is undercut by that; it’s undermined by that.

Yes, we support it, absolutely. Just to finish off, I again want to say, on behalf of all New Democrats, on behalf of our leader, we are so proud of you for being here. We are so proud of you for instigating this bill and for your activism. Our souls ring with yours in this moment, and we wish that what happened to your son should never happen to another child. I think your presence here makes that more possible.

1620

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: As a physician, as a parliamentarian, as well as, by the way, a lecturer in asthma, at the outset of course—j’ai le plaisir de soutenir le projet de loi 135 de mon collègue d’Elgin–Middlesex–London, Jeff Yurek. I’d also like to acknowledge Ryan’s family for their presence and their moral support.

I’d also like to introduce and re-welcome, sitting in double galleries—the opposition gallery has been mentioned, Andrea Stevens-Lavigne and Sherry Zarins, to be joined as well by my colleague at the Ontario Lung Association, Dilshad Moosa, who is joined by her niece visiting from South Africa, Layla Cassim

I would simply say that it’s a very important issue, as has been mentioned. An increase is upon us in asthma, whether it’s allergic triggers, whether it’s, for example, pollution-based, plastics in the workplace, home renovations, insulation, the long-lost pet who will not be turned out of doors but nevertheless continues to flare up allergies of the family—you name it. Many, many reasons and all these things act as a confluence.

My colleague said that students should be allowed to keep the puffer in the pocket. I would support that. I would, though, with respect like to say that this blue puffer, though offering immediate relief—Ventolin or salbutamol—is to be used only as a rescue inhaler, only as an emergency inhaler, not as the underlying therapy of asthma. I repeat that for all Ontarians.

The underlying therapy for asthma are what we call anti-inflammatories—a fancy word for stuff like Flovent or Symbicort or Zenhale, and other medications—that actually puts out the fire that’s going on in the lungs, helps to dry the phlegm, the mucus, the crud that’s actually in the lungs. Because that’s the actual underlying disease. This is only a kind of pep for a while. It’s very

important. It can be an emergency-level therapy, but it is very important to understand the underlying therapy of asthma. You’re not probably going to be carrying just one puffer, most likely, but that still remains to be seen.

It is true that I would support this issue of having schools have a process/procedure because typically what will happen is, a kid is somewhat embarrassed about having this condition, and certainly doesn’t want to self-administer the puffer of whatever colour in front of folks, has a bit of an attack—a need, a wheeze, a cough, phlegm in the chest—and basically goes and sequesters himself, and maybe is found either unconscious or lying in a corner in the washroom, in a stall etc. And that’s the worst-case scenario that can happen in an asthmatic situation. So puffers are very important.

I would also support, of course, the Minister of Education, that this is probably beyond the expertise of principals and the school communities alone. The action plan, whether it’s the green, yellow or red zone, which we can provide to every asthmatic patient for free, courtesy of the Ontario Lung Association, is something that should be written, understood by the family, perhaps even the student. That can certainly be part of the file and part of the overall plan/protocol should there be an attack, meaning, if this happens, then do that. But this is definitely likely beyond the expertise, first of all of the principal, the school communities, and is, of course, something we at the Lung Association are encouraging physicians to do more of at the family practice, as well as certainly at the specialist level.

Triggers of allergies are there. There are certainly many, many confluences that act—the river runs through it, again whether it’s pollution, winter weather, pets. By the way, asthmatic kids and probably asthmatic patients in general should get the flu shot so that we can live and breathe easily.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I’d first like to thank Mrs. Gibbons as well. I commend you for your strength and courage. No one should ever bury a child. Ryan is definitely in our thoughts today. I’d also like to thank the lung association. We do take for granted, all the time, how we breathe, if we’re not in that position. Until you’re in that position, it’s very hard to understand how you feel while you are gasping for air.

I think I want to actually just go a bit further with what we were just hearing. It’s very hereditary in my family. My father had emphysema at the age of 52 and died, and had a puffer in his hand every two minutes. My aunt was the same. My daughter, very young, was very asthmatic. We used to have a nebulizer that we would actually carry around with us at the time.

I think it’s educating yourselves on what actually it is that you can do, because I can be quite frank and tell you that I don’t know how many doctors I went to. I was like, “Is it the blue, the orange—is it the puffer?” I was so confused as a parent. I used to, seriously, phone over to the drugstore to say, “Look, I don’t know which one I’m

supposed to be giving.” The education of trying to learn that as a parent—I can’t imagine how a child would feel trying to figure that out when we as parents are not educated properly on what we’re supposed to be giving. We’re at physicians’; we’re going from one to the next trying to get the answers for these children that are deer in the headlights when they’re gasping for air.

I think that’s first and foremost. I think I actually want to commend my colleague from Elgin–Middlesex–London for bringing this bill forward, because it’s all about educating ourselves and knowing what to do. If I say anything here today, children have to have a safe place where they can go. When you’re young and don’t understand the ramifications when you’re breathing and if it’s a bad spot or not at a bad spot, because we, as parents—I can tell you numerous times I thought my daughter was fine, you know, and then I’d go in the middle of the night and you could see that she was blue. As a parent, I thought I was on it 90% of the time, but clearly, with not getting the proper information from doctor after doctor, I was not.

I think it’s very important that, even in this day and age, we get the information that we need, and proper information, that people that actually talk about it know what they’re saying instead of just surmising, “Do a blue, and here’s two orange, and then, if that doesn’t work, here’s a tube one that you can take.”

Because you watch even my dad—I mean, my dad was 52 years old. He was taking puffers every two minutes. I don’t even know half the time if he even knew what he was doing, except he was gasping for air. But then two minutes later, he says he’s not feeling good. I go over to get him at the drugstore and they’re zipping him up in a black bag because he’s had a cardiac arrest from his breathing over there.

Today, I’m grateful for this. I think children have to have a safe haven where they can actually go when they feel distressed, because they’re not always sure that they are in distress—that they’re able to go in and get the help that they need without panicking about where that is to go.

Thank you so much for letting me have this opportunity to speak today. From the bottom of my heart, thank you so much for being here. It’s very commendable of you. By no means do I know how you feel, because I do not, but I only imagine the pain that you have. Thank you for this today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Chatham–Kent–Essex.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It’s my honour and privilege to rise today and stand in support of the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London’s Bill 135, better known as Ryan’s Law. As my colleague stated so passionately in his opening remarks, this bill was inspired by the loss of 12-year-old Ryan Gibbons.

Ryan was a typical young boy who loved keeping active, riding his bike and playing with friends. His asthma didn’t seem to slow him down. Like many children, he suffered an asthma attack. Sadly, Ryan passed

away. His mother, Sandra, then took it upon herself, with support from her family, to champion the issue and to help protect all of our children.

Ryan’s Law has a noble purpose: to make all schools across the province asthma-friendly environments. Addressing asthma is something that each of us should take very seriously. An individual in Ontario has a 34% risk of developing asthma before they reach 80 years of age. What we see when we look across this province is a patchwork of asthma policy. This is because there are currently no standards for asthma planning, and school boards are left to develop their own plans. What this bill sets out to do is to help out with these standards.

As the PC critic for sport, recreation and youth, I support this bill wholeheartedly. We must do all we can to protect the health of our children and help them maintain healthy lives. I had a staffer who grew up with asthma. He told me that as a kid he wanted to make sure that his asthma never got in the way of him being a kid. He was lucky enough to avoid any major attacks.

So again, I want to applaud the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London, Ryan’s mother and the Ontario Lung Association for working tirelessly to improve the health of our children. Let’s work together in this Legislature and let’s get this bill passed after second reading.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

1630

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I’m pleased to stand and join the debate today as a member of the healthy lung caucus, which I believe my colleague from Durham is a member of as well. It’s a non-partisan organization that is in place due to the vision of the Ontario Lung Association, and we certainly appreciate their efforts to make people more aware of the hazards associated with breathing.

I say that sincerely, because I’ve experienced firsthand the terror in the eyes when someone can’t get their breath. There’s no worse feeling than that. The fact of the matter is that this bill is so, so important. I’m reflecting on my father, but I think of my friend Paula, and I think about my childhood friend Melanie, who lost her husband to an asthma attack as well. Darn it; I’ve got to learn how not to do this. But it’s such a touching, touching experience. I think of Brenda Cummings. She is such a champion for healthy breathing for people of all ages.

And we have to do this. Today, we can do such a good thing as a minority government. We can stand united as breathers and do the right thing and get this through to committee.

I just want to say that it’s important to remember that asthma can be managed, and the quality of life can be so, so good. But we have to have the right support mechanisms in place and the right support infrastructure. This is what this bill is intended to do, in memory of Ryan, and as a tip of the hat and a tribute to the advocacy that Ryan’s mom has put forward so selflessly.

Mr. Speaker, I think we're onto a very, very good thing, and I congratulate the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London. He has led by his heart with this piece of legislation. By doing so, I believe that Ryan Gibbons's legacy will be a healthy and safe learning environment for students who suffer with asthma in all schools across the province.

I'm encouraged by what I'm hearing today in debate, because it sounds like everybody is on the right track, and this piece of legislation, through committee and a lot of good, heartfelt effort, could expand to kids with epilepsy, to kids with diabetes, so that a healthy, safe environment for all students could ultimately be Ryan Gibbons's legacy.

Thank you very much, everyone; and to our member from Elgin–Middlesex–London, congratulations.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Elgin–Middlesex–London, you have two minutes.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: To my colleague from Huron–Bruce, you're shattering our evil hearts on the PC caucus. We're a party of compassion. Thank you very much.

I'd like to thank the members from Kitchener–Waterloo, the Minister of Education, the member from Haldimand–Norfolk, the member from Parkdale–High Park, the member from Burlington, the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex, of course the member from Huron–Bruce and the member from Etobicoke North, who taught me a new medical term today, "crud." I'm going to my medical dictionary to look that up.

I want to say that this bill does one thing: It's increasing awareness. It's increasing education to our parents, students and educators. Basically, for Mr. Hammond—I'm looking forward to meeting with him; I've made contact with his office—nothing is really going to change from what's currently occurring right now for children with asthma. Right now, children have to leave the class, if that's the policy, and go to the office. This allows them to reach in their pocket and giving themselves a puff instead of leaving the class.

I'm sure the FDK students who might need some assistance are already getting the assistance they need in classrooms, so we can alleviate those fears. We can work with ETFO and ensure that that's done.

With regard to the principals, I certainly don't expect the principals to do this on their own. The bill does make mention of the assistance of the family physician or treating physician—they definitely need to support. I truly encourage families to be more involved with the health care of their children, and this bill will help. It's a bill that's going to minimize risk for our students and improve children's lives.

I think it's a good bill to pass on second reading. Let's get it into committee next week and pass it next Thursday, would be my hope.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

PROTECTION OF MINORS IN AMATEUR SPORTS ACT, 2013 LOI DE 2013 SUR LA PROTECTION DES MINEURS PARTICIPANT À DES SPORTS AMATEURS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 64, standing in the name of Mr. Ouellette.

Mr. Ouellette has moved second reading of Bill 104, An Act to provide protection for minors participating in amateur sports.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the member for Oshawa.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, I would recommend the bill to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy. Agreed? Agreed.

ENERGY POLICIES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Bisson has moved private member's notice of motion number 56.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We'll take the vote at the end of private business.

RYAN'S LAW (ENSURING ASTHMA FRIENDLY SCHOOLS), 2013

LOI RYAN DE 2013 POUR ASSURER LA CRÉATION D'ÉCOLES ATTENTIVES À L'ASTHME

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Yurek has moved second reading of Bill 135, An Act to protect pupils with asthma.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Call in the members. It will be a five-minute bell.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Oh, wait a minute. You have to ask him which committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Sorry. Mr. Yurek?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Social policy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to social policy. Agreed? Agreed.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.
The division bells rang from 1637 to 1642.

ENERGY POLICIES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Bisson has moved private member's notice of motion number 56. All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hatfield, Percy	Singh, Jagmeet
Bisson, Gilles	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter
DiNovo, Cheri	Miller, Paul	Taylor, Monique
Fife, Catherine	Prue, Michael	
Forster, Cindy	Schein, Jonah	

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please stand and remain standing.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Jeffrey, Linda	O'Toole, John
Arnott, Ted	Kwinter, Monte	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Leone, Rob	Pettapiece, Randy
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	MacCharles, Tracy	Piruzza, Teresa
Chan, Michael	MacLaren, Jack	Qaadri, Shafiq
Damerla, Dipika	MacLeod, Lisa	Sandals, Liz
Del Duca, Steven	Mangat, Amrit	Sergio, Mario
Delaney, Bob	McKenna, Jane	Thompson, Lisa M.
Dickson, Joe	Milligan, Rob E.	Walker, Bill
Duguid, Brad	Milloy, John	Wilson, Jim
Hunter, Mitzie	Moridi, Reza	Yurek, Jeff
Jackson, Rod	Munro, Julia	
Jaczek, Helena	Nicholls, Rick	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 13; the nays are 37.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 VISANT À SOUTENIR LES PETITES ENTREPRISES

Ms. Sandals, on behalf of Mr. Sousa, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act / Projet de loi 105, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'impôt-santé des employeurs.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Sandals.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I will be sharing my time with the member from Scarborough–Guildwood, but I would just like to say that what this bill does—it's an Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act. It is targeted at helping more than 60,000 Ontario small businesses and promoting jobs and growth.

Briefly, businesses with annual payrolls of under \$5 million will be exempt from paying the employer health tax on the first \$450,000 of their payroll each year, and if this is going to happen, we need to get this vote done.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Scarborough–Guildwood.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Speaker. I am pleased to rise today for the third reading of Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act. I know that the members of this House have already had a chance, for some time, to have good discussion about what this bill would mean for small businesses in Ontario. Today I'm looking forward to continuing that discussion.

I had the opportunity to host a forum for small businesses in my riding just last week. Over 100 residents in my community participated: small business owners, employment agencies and community organizations. We talked about a lot of issues, ways for government to improve how we serve our small businesses and how to create job opportunities, especially for our youth.

Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act, is a key part of this government's strong plan to create further job opportunities. As a strong voice for Scarborough–Guildwood, I'm looking forward to using my time today to discuss the merits of this legislation for my own community and for communities across Ontario.

First, I would like to remind members how this bill would help small employers in Ontario. Second, I'd like to talk a bit more about the important role that small businesses play in Ontario's economy. Third, I would like to outline what our government has done to make Ontario a great place to do business. Last, I would like to talk about how this bill fits into our government's plan to create jobs and grow the economy.

The Supporting Small Businesses Act would, if passed, help small employers cut costs and reduce paperwork. We know that when small businesses save money, they can put more resources into hiring people and growing their operations.

I'm going to take a moment to remind members of some of the details of this bill and what it would mean for small businesses.

What is the employer health tax, and what is this bill proposing to change? The employer health tax is a tax that is paid by employers on their Ontario payrolls. Currently, all private sector employers, regardless of size, are exempt from paying EHT on up to \$400,000 of their Ontario payroll each year. This bill would increase the EHT exemption for small employers to \$450,000. This would mean up to \$975 saved per small employer annually. Increasing the EHT exemption for small employers would help them cut the cost of hiring, and cutting the cost of hiring would encourage these businesses to grow.

During the small business forum that I had in my riding, I heard directly from small employers—employers such as Bombay Bazaar; Chic Hair Design; Conrad's Barbershop; Creative Learning and Culture Centre; Delta Grinding; Ellis Flowers; Estheticare Day

Spa and Salon, a small business that has been operating in my riding of Scarborough—Guildwood for 20 years; Family Leather; Feline Glow; G&G Electronics; Good Luck Catering; GoodLife Fitness; I FIX U PC; India Town; Jong Park Tae Kwon-Do; Just Sweets and Treats; Kaks Hair Emporium; Kipit Baha'i; Land Effects Outdoor Living Spaces; Marshall Arcade; N&A Tax Services; Pals Staffing Services; Plaza Physiotherapy, Procom Canada Systems, and I could certainly go on, because many of these businesses are putting their best efforts in order to stay in business and keep our economy going.

1650

How would this bill help employers, including small businesses, charities and non-profits? This bill would give these employers a tax break, and the cost of this tax break would be paid for by eliminating the same exemption altogether for private sector employers with annual Ontario payrolls of more than \$5 million.

How many employers would this bill help? The Supporting Small Businesses Act would result in 60,000 employers paying less EHT. In fact, 12,000 of those would no longer pay this tax at all, and those 12,000 employers would also save the cost of filing an EHT return. That means less time and money spent on paperwork. With this proposal, a total of 88% of Ontario's private sector employers would not pay EHT, so employers can put more resources into what matters most: creating jobs, innovating and growing their business.

What about inflation? To protect smaller employers from the cost of inflation, this exemption would be adjusted every five years, using the consumer price index.

Those are the reasons that I am urging all members to support this bill. It's a bill that would help small businesses save money. By cutting costs and reducing paperwork, this bill would help small employers focus on some of what they do best: contributing to Ontario's economy and creating jobs.

Now that I've discussed the benefits of the Supporting Small Businesses Act, I'd like to talk about just how important small businesses are to our province. You could say that small businesses are a key engine of Ontario's economy. They are important contributors of jobs. In fact, in 2012, more than half of all Ontarians working for a business were employed by small and medium-sized businesses.

Small and medium-sized businesses are also important innovators and boosters of our province's competitiveness. In the period from 2009 to 2011, approximately nine out of every 20 Ontario small and medium-sized businesses reported an innovation related to product, process, organization or marketing.

Small and medium-sized businesses are boosting Ontario's economy while showing the world what we can do. In 2009, more than 95% of Ontario's exporters of goods were small and medium-sized businesses. Our province's small and medium-sized exporters accounted for approximately 40% of the value of Ontario goods

exported in 2009. Approximately one of every eight small and medium-sized businesses exported a good or service in 2011.

That's why this bill is so important, because small businesses are critical to Ontario's economy, and create jobs for the people of this province.

We know just how important small businesses are for Ontario's economy. That's why we introduced a new plan for jobs and growth in our recent fall economic statement. One of the key pillars of our new plan is supporting a dynamic and innovative business climate.

We know that the fundamentals of Ontario's economy are strong, and we know that our economy is well-diversified with key industries, including agricultural, forestry, mining, manufacturing and services. A really great example in my own riding of Scarborough—Guildwood is the partnership between Centennial College and Bombardier, which has created opportunities for young people to prepare for jobs of the future.

Our government has put in place a competitive tax system for businesses, made regulations less burdensome, and enhanced the safety and efficiency of capital markets, while delivering lower-than-forecasted deficits.

I'm going to take a moment to talk about some of the specific measures we've taken, including tax relief and regulatory reform, as well as education and skills training.

First, I'd like to talk about tax relief. The bill we are discussing today would add to the important steps we have already taken to put in place a competitive business tax system in Ontario. Here are just a few examples of tax measures that are helping small businesses.

Our government's move to a federally administered harmonized sales tax is reducing compliance costs for businesses. The HST is also providing most businesses with input tax credits to recover the sales tax they pay on many of their business purchases. Also, on July 1, 2010, our government cut the corporate income tax rate for small businesses to 4.5% from 5.5%, and eliminated the small businesses deduction surtax.

In fact, Jack Mintz, a well-known economist, estimates that Ontario's Tax Plan for Jobs and Growth reduced the tax burden on small businesses' investments by more than half. That's a decrease in the tax burden from almost 29% to just over 13%.

There are many other tax measures that our government has put in place to benefit small businesses. We have cut business education tax rates by more than \$200 million since 2007. We provided a 10% refundable tax credit for eligible small corporations performing research and development in Ontario. Small businesses are eligible for enhanced refundable tax credit rates for hiring apprentices and co-op students, investing in our young people and our future labour pool.

Those are just some of the ways that our government has put in place a tax system that encourages small businesses to thrive and grow.

Our government has also introduced a number of regulatory reforms to help small businesses. Our Open

for Business initiative is helping to create faster, smarter, streamlined government-to-business services that will make Ontario more attractive for business development while protecting the public interest.

Some of the Open for Business initiatives include: developing a small business sector strategy to strengthen small business success; creating more open, responsive ways to work for businesses; reducing regulatory burdens on businesses and stakeholders by more than 17%, or more than 80,000 regulatory requirements; and building a foundation for improving services to businesses that protect the public interest and promote business competitiveness and welcome new businesses to the province.

Those are some of the ways that our government is helping small businesses through regulatory reforms.

Our government's investments in education and skills training programs are also boosting small businesses' success. Ontario has many different apprenticeship and skills training programs to address the need for skilled workers. Here are a few examples.

The 2013 budget outlined our comprehensive \$295-million youth jobs strategy to support and promote employment opportunities, entrepreneurship and innovation for youth in Ontario. I know that many agencies in my riding are working with local businesses to connect young people with the opportunities available through this program.

Our Apprenticeship Training Tax Credit provides a 45% refundable tax credit for small businesses that hire eligible apprentices in construction, motive power, industrial and certain skilled trades.

The Ontario co-op education tax credit provides a 30% refundable tax credit for small businesses that hire qualifying post-secondary co-op students. The 30% Off Ontario Tuition grant supports post-secondary education, particularly benefitting those with moderate and low income. Those are some of the ways that our government is investing in people and businesses to give our companies a competitive edge.

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To recap, our government is supporting our province's small businesses through tax relief, regulatory reform and education and skills training. These supports are helping our small businesses to compete and win in a global marketplace.

I would like to now take a few moments to talk about our government's plan for jobs and growth. As I have mentioned before, the bill we are discussing today is an important part of our commitment to create the right environment for small businesses to invest in Ontario and the right environment for small businesses to grow. I've already mentioned the small business forum I hosted in Scarborough-Guildwood, talking about growing small businesses and promoting job creation. This bill is a key part of that.

We recently introduced our three-part plan for jobs and growth. This plan includes investing in people, building modern infrastructure and supporting a dynamic

and innovative business climate. I have already highlighted a few of the ways that our government is supporting a dynamic and innovative business climate. In a moment, I will expand on the measures we are taking to invest in people and to invest in infrastructure.

But first, I'd like to remind the members of this House of our plan to continue managing responsibly. We are on track to balance the budget by 2017-18, in a fair and responsible way. For four years in a row, we have overachieved on our deficit targets, and we are on track to achieve our deficit reduction—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I've been listening very carefully to you. I think you're stretching it a little far from what is in front of us. If you could bring it back to the bill? Thank you.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Speaker. We know we must make new strategic investments to spur growth, to create jobs and to strengthen services for families. Bill 105 is one of the ways that we're doing so.

We also know that the world's recovery from a global recession remains uncertain. Many families are still feeling unsure about their job security and financial future. Should our global economic conditions falter, causing revenue growth to fall further, our priority will be to continue to protect investments in jobs, growth and families ahead of short-term targets.

I'd like to take a moment now to discuss how our government is investing in people and building modern infrastructure. Our plan—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would remind the speaker again. I would like you to speak to the bill that's in front of us as much as you can.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Absolutely, Speaker. We are working to secure agreement among our provinces and federal government for enhancing the Canada Pension Plan. If the federal government cannot be brought on board, we will move forward with a made-in-Ontario solution. This is an important aspect for all small businesses and for workers in Ontario.

We're also supporting 21st century learning because we know that investments in our education will: continue to build on our students' achievements; support innovative, technology-enabled teaching and learning practices; integrate the skills necessary to succeed in the 21st century global labour market. That's why we're moving forward with initiatives including our supports for full-day kindergarten, the 30% off tuition grant and further measures—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'm going to bring the member back. I would like you to speak to Bill 105, because I will have to move to the next speaker.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Absolutely, Speaker. What I'm talking about here today is investing in the people who work each and every day in our small businesses and ensuring that we create a climate in Ontario that supports the growth of our small businesses—supports like providing 30,000 young people with help to find jobs. This is critical. We know that most of these young people will

end up working in our small businesses, and that is an important aspect. We have to keep our small businesses working.

We also know that supporting training and investments in people is going to ensure that we have a qualified labour pool to sustain job growth in Ontario.

Our government is ensuring that we create the right conditions to support small business growth. I have already discussed our strong plan to support a dynamic and innovative business climate and our plan to invest in people. I will now take a moment to highlight our plan to build modern infrastructure, and this infrastructure supports the economic prosperity and growth—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Again, you're drifting into infrastructure, and that has nothing to do with the bill.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Absolutely, Speaker. I am absolutely convinced that in order to sustain our small business growth, we have to support the infrastructure that so many small businesses are connected to in many, many ways.

In fact, many think tanks and economists have talked about the vital role that infrastructure plays in ensuring that our economy remains competitive. These investments are ensuring that we create jobs. Well over 100,000 jobs will be created that are construction-related across this province.

To recap, investing in people, building modern infrastructure, and supporting a dynamic and innovative business climate will ensure that our economy in Ontario continues to grow and thrive. As I wrap up, I would like to highlight again the key points of Bill 105 and why supporting small businesses is vital to Ontario's economy.

This bill would help cut the costs of hiring for small businesses, non-profits and charities. It would result in 60,000 employers paying less employer health tax. It would result in 12,000 of these employers no longer paying the EHT at all. It would also cut paperwork for those employers no longer paying the tax. That's why this bill is so important. It would give a much-needed tax break to small employers so that they can grow and invest in Ontario.

This bill, if passed, would mean businesses in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood would be able to grow and create good, local jobs. As a strong voice for my community, I'm proud to be here at Queen's Park supporting this legislation.

I urge all members of this House to support this bill and to support it quickly, because this is an important opportunity for us to work together to help small businesses to prosper, the small business sector that is so vital to the economy here in Ontario.

NELSON MANDELA

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. John Milloy: We've just been informed that Nelson Mandela, the former president of South Africa, has passed away within the last little while. I know that there will probably be an opportunity for statements in the House as we head into next week, but I thought I would rise on this occasion and seek unanimous consent, in the hope that we could perhaps have a moment of silence in his memory.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The government House leader has requested unanimous consent for a moment of silence. Agreed? Agreed.

We'll all rise to observe a moment of silence.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

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SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 VISANT À SOUTENIR LES PETITES ENTREPRISES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I respect the House leader's respect for a respected world leader, and I look forward to there being remarks in the future.

Just in response to the member from Scarborough–Guildwood, I want to be deferential to her and pay respect, because honestly she is new here and she's a very experienced and a very excellent speaker. I'd say that this bill was certainly, I think quite liberal, if I could say that, in allowing her to stray slightly from the bill. In fact, at one point there she was talking about a bill that we debated this morning, Bill 141, which is also an important bill tied to the infrastructure of Ontario.

But the bill here is—I hope to have an hour or two to speak on this in a few minutes. If those watching want to tune in here, I'll be taking advantage of that opportunity to put things into a broader perspective with respect to Bill 105.

But, no, her remarks were quite salient with respect to time, the infrastructure and the fundamentals of today's economy to the small part that the bill did—and I think this is where we probably have a fair amount of agreement—at least we tried to get it to committee and move forward with the bill because she did mention that what the bill really does is it increases the ceiling on the employer health tax.

Now, we fundamentally think that it's a tax and, as such, we think that we should look at other alternatives to level the playing field. I'll bring some context to it in my remarks, with a recent report from the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters and the automotive council, part of that is how we can maintain manufacturing jobs. But really, then she did mention, as well, that this whole thing sort of collapses on itself. You get to \$5 million of total payroll, and you don't get any relief. In Ontario,

we've always said—and she did in her remarks—the amount of the tax value to the company under the \$5 million and at the \$450,000-level of payroll would be about \$900, and that wouldn't buy a newspaper ad—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to my friend and colleague from Scarborough–Guildwood. I've known her for a number of years. She is quite polished when she reads a speech, but I do have to say that she should perhaps ask her colleagues and the people in the Liberal Party who prepare these notes—

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Oh, no, you're supposed to talk about the bill.

Mr. Michael Prue: No, no; I am—who prepare these notes to keep them on topic because when she spoke, she had to be reminded many times—rightly so—by the Speaker that she was straying off topic. I know that this is a difficult topic.

Interjections.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Comments.

Mr. Michael Prue: I know—it's comments; perhaps the minister doesn't understand this either.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I understand—

Mr. Michael Prue: Okay. Because I'm trying to assist the member from Scarborough–Guildwood because she is such an intelligent person and because she wants, I know, in her heart, to actually speak to the bill.

The important thing for all of us here is to understand that. When you have to speak to the bill, you don't have to read what is put in front of you. It's true. So I'm hoping that she will take this in the heart in which it's given, because I'm trying to assist.

And, Mr. Speaker, when she was speaking to the bill, on those points and those areas when she actually dealt with Bill 105, I commend her for what she had to say. She was quite forthright and honest. This is not a bill of monumental proportion to small business. By the government's own admission, it will run into about \$945 in savings to a small business. That is not going to create that kind of climate that is going to make a great deal. Is it a help to small business? Absolutely. It's why the NDP proposed it in the first place. Is it going to make the kind of fundamental difference in the grandiose scheme of what was being discussed? I think not.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Mississauga–Cooksville.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: East.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mississauga East–Cooksville.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to begin by complimenting my colleague, the MPP for Scarborough–Guildwood. The one thing that I noticed when she was speaking was, she tied it back to the small businesses in her riding. That's what a good MPP does. It really isn't about whether she, for a few minutes, was speaking directly to the bill or not. But the point is, she got it right; she got the big things right. She got it right that this bill as—each of us as an MPP is really talking

about the small businesses in our own riding and what that means. So congratulations and well done.

To the MPP for Beaches–East York, he's a very, very articulate speaker, but I did have a little bit of contention when he says: What's \$1,000 a year going to do for a small business? It's going to do a lot.

Mr. Michael Prue: I didn't say that.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Yes, well, you did. You did. In so many words, you did imply that. I find that troubling, because \$1,000 a year is a lot of money for most people in this province, including me. So I just wanted to say that that is very helpful. You know, little things add up. A penny a day adds up; \$1,000 a year over 10 years adds up—adds up to a substantial renovation, perhaps, for that business. So I wouldn't laugh it off and say that's small, it's a pittance, because to me it's a step in the right direction. It's the kind of things we need to do to make sure that small business thrives in Ontario.

One of the reasons I think that the MPP for Scarborough–Guildwood was having trouble is because this bill shouldn't be debated. It's a slam dunk. I don't even know why we're debating this. It should just go to royal assent, and then we wouldn't be having any debate at all.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm not really sure what to say about that previous comment from the Mississauga East–Cooksville, but I do have some sympathy with what the member from Beaches–East York was saying, simply because he doesn't want to ruin the Liberal spin on what essentially is an NDP idea. The fact is that he wants the Liberals to talk about the essential components of an NDP plan, and when they're not doing that appropriately I can sympathize with him, why he'd be a little upset by the fact that we're not speaking directly to the points that the NDP have made.

This bill is an interesting one. I note that the threshold is being raised from \$400,000 to \$450,000 on who is going to receive a little bit extra of a break. When I look at that, I see the raising of the threshold and the things that have been put forward in this piece of legislation as the government doing precisely the minimal amount before it can actually say—by doing the minimal amount and not costing them money because they don't have any money—they are going around saying, “We're helping small businesses.”

Even though at the end of the day the amount that is helping, the less than \$1,000 in a year, isn't going to create any jobs—I mean, let's face it. A per diem on a government consulting contract is more than what this bill is going to provide. So it's not even a day's work for a small business that does work for the government.

This is being sold to the people of Ontario as a jobs bill, but the amount of relief it's providing—one has to wonder how many jobs it's actually going to create.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Scarborough–Guildwood, you have two minutes.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the members from all sides of this House, from Durham, Beaches–East York, Mississauga East–Cooksville and Cambridge, for commenting on my remarks about the Supporting Small Businesses Act, Bill 105.

I'm very, very confident that what I discussed today about the vital role that small businesses play in our economy is essential and that we have to ensure that we support small businesses' success.

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I have a heart for small business. I've worked for over 20 years with small businesses, starting in Scarborough. This weekend was actually an event called Shop the Neighbourhood, which supports buying local from your local neighbourhood stores. I had an opportunity to visit two small business owners in my riding. What they shared with me was their struggle to stay open, but their absolute passion and commitment to their craft and the work that they do on behalf of the community.

One of them was the West Hill Wine Bar. That business owner, in fact, is a top chef. He said to me that it was one article in one newspaper that opened the doors for customers to know that he is there. So that \$975 a year that small businesses are going to be saving could be used to market and promote their businesses. It could be used to create some small innovation; as small as it may be, it might be the key to that small business staying open, flourishing and creating employment opportunities.

I would encourage all of us to listen to our small businesses and to support Bill 105 and really pass this bill into law. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: The first thing I'd like to do officially is ask for unanimous consent to stand down our lead on the third reading of Bill 105.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Durham has requested unanimous consent to stand down their lead. Agreed? Agreed.

Member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, I want to say that, yes, jobs and the economy are central to many of our ridings and the plight of Ontario citizens today. I do want to commend the member from Beaches–East York and the NDP. Let's put this thing in perspective: This measure was introduced in the last Liberal budget, or what I call the coalition budget. It was really brought up by Andrea Horwath and the NDP and was adopted as a consensus measure by the Liberals to make this concession to business.

I have some comments on it because Bill 105—our argument is not about whether it's appropriate to give a tax break; quite the contrary. Our arguments, even in committee, were just that. We should—if it's going to be that good for a small business, as she described, the wine craft store, that \$900 might pay for the ad for the new job, but it wouldn't pay anything towards the new job directly. So our suggestion in committee, and I should put—it's hard because my notes aren't thoroughly

developed just yet; they probably will be on Monday. But the issue here really is this: Bill 105 is quite a small bill, for the viewers here. What it does is simply two things, really. It changes the employer health tax exemption threshold from \$400,000 to \$150,000 of payroll and then it caps it at the \$5 million. Once your payroll is \$5 million, you don't get any exemptions.

Well, in fact, it's worth repeating the section of the bill. Under this section of the bill on page 2, subsection 2.1(5) says, "If the total Ontario remuneration paid by an employer during a year beginning after December 31, 2013 is more than the exemption threshold for the employer and the employer is not associated with any other employers" at the time of the year, "the exemption amount of the employer for the year is nil."

If it's that good that she claimed it helped that little store in Scarborough–Guildwood, imagine what a larger exemption would be. It would be twice as good, perhaps. So if you really want to track the tax policy argument, then we're saying that less is bad and more is good. We moved amendments in committee, and what is the most surprising and disappointing and actually disheartening is, our critic on this file, and our finance critic specifically, Mr. Fedeli, is a very highly respected business person and a small business person, a former mayor of Sault Ste. Marie—

Mr. Rob Leone: North Bay.

Mr. John O'Toole: North Bay; pardon me. I keep saying "Sault Ste. Marie."

He wanted to move the threshold; I believe the number in our amendment was \$800,000, or I guess it may have been to eliminate the employer health tax. Imagine, all the businesses would then go out and hire somebody because they would have more money in their pocket to make more products or services, whichever they provide. They voted it down. The only reason the Liberals ever even did this was because they were forced to do it by the NDP; that's the end of the argument.

I've only got about an hour to speak on this. I don't even have an hour, actually, unfortunately. So I'm going to move on.

We moved a number of amendments. I got a copy; I went to the Clerks' table. This is third reading, and I did speak on this in second reading, and I suggested many of the things then that I thought our critic put forward at the committee level. Stage 3 is where we are here.

There wasn't a single amendment in the bill—not one single amendment in the bill. If they were really—what she was saying in her conclusion was, let's get on with this. In fact, the member from Mississauga–Cooksville—

Interjection: East.

Mr. John O'Toole:—Mississauga East–Cooksville said that we don't even need to be talking about this. That's not how things work, like that, quite so easily, in the legislative democratic process.

Our position, and we stand firm to it, is that small business does create the jobs. In fact, just moving a little bit off the bill for a moment, this morning we debated Bill 141, which is about building infrastructure in

Ontario. We could argue about the different types of infrastructure that are required.

What we've done is look at what the experts are saying on this whole thing. We all agree that this bill, Bill 105, about strengthening our economy and jobs in the economy—our leader, Tim Hudak, gave the Liberal government under Kathleen Wynne an agreement. The agreement was that we would clear the decks—these are just terms, I suppose—that is, give them a certain number of bills, and in return the Premier would table a jobs strategy. We have asked every day for eight straight days, pleading for them to table a jobs plan. They're claiming that Bill 105 is the jobs plan. We've just heard that it's modest, if not non-existent. I guess, well, that's the argument that was being made by the previous speaker.

What we did do is, we looked at the best practices around. One of the documents that we all got this week—I encourage the viewers and the members of government to have a look at it—is called Course Correction: Charting a New Road Map for Ontario. This document is done by Roger Martin, from the Rotman school of business—highly respected; a very highly respected family—and received very glowing remarks when the Institute for Competitiveness and Prosperity issued the report on November 28. In it, it does summarize some of the requirements for the province of Ontario to improve its competitiveness. That's really the essence of the whole report. In the report, it does have several sections that I think are relevant to this. One of them is the amount of red tape and regulation. It's mentioned in this report; it's mentioned by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

Let's be honest, not to get too far off the topic here: Some months ago—the most esteemed economist in Canada, probably, is Don Drummond. He issued a competitiveness report. I think it had 163 recommendations. In that, he said clearly that Ontario, and Premier Wynne and Mr. Sousa, the finance minister—we have a structural deficit in Ontario. What that means is, we're expanding expenditures faster than we're expanding revenues.

This is where you get into the dichotomy here. Our argument is that by giving more money to the investor, the small business and the medium-sized business, to grow their economy and to modernize their tooling and technology, they will create jobs because they'll create quality products at a competitive price. That's the economics of it all, to some extent.

In framing all this, we respect the delivery of quality public services; without that, our quality of life is affected. But we can't have that if we don't have the economy that supports it. So it is a Catch-22. The competitiveness document I referred to was issued to the Premier; the information is there.

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Another document, as I mentioned earlier, is a report by the manufacturing competitiveness committee of the Canadian Automotive Partnership Council. And even in this report—I've had a few chances to look at it. It dealt

with three or four areas in its two sections on conclusions and recommendations. I don't have enough time to cover it in any detail. It's important reading, and I hope some of the ministers on the economic files over there have a look at it.

It really said it quite clearly. This is why I don't like to plagiarize; I'm giving it full credit: "Reduce the fully loaded cost of labour." This is not Tim Hudak speaking or anyone else. It says, "The fully loaded cost is higher in Canada than it is in the US even though the Canadian industry has taken major steps to reduce the gap. More steps are needed in areas under government control. These include employment insurance," employment standards, "the employer health tax"—it's right in there—"and ... compensation premiums."

WSIB is another area that should be targeted. That's a tax on payroll. WSIB is important. It's insurance, but WSIB has a two-sided edge. It's mandatory that employers apply a tax on their payroll. The tax or the rate—the WSIB premium—varies by industry, and the industry is rated by its amount of risk. A roofer pays more, probably 10% of payroll, than does someone filing envelopes or something. But they all pay.

What they did in the sector, which is a very active sector—which is construction and home renovations, that trades sector—is they upped the rate, and they said, that the whole payroll, not the salesperson in the field who is selling the contract, the person in accounts payable, the person in the payroll department or the HR department, the owner, the owner's wife. Everybody is paying it now. They're not on the job site. In fact, they're not entitled to a claim because they would have to demonstrate that their injury was related to a work-related incident, which would be reported and the WSIB would come with some mechanism of mitigating or offsetting the loss of income.

That's a good example of a regressive tax because it's really almost contradictory to this one, the Bill 105 part. That's only one section I read. With your indulgence, I'm reading the report and trying to relate it to Bill 105—which are other tools at the government's disposal, brought to them by stakeholders interested in growing the economy. It goes on here and it says, "Ease regulatory burden." I'm not making this up, Mr. Speaker. What it says here is, "CAPC members understand and support government efforts to green the economy. It is an initiative that is aligned with the automotive industry's efforts to reduce the environmental footprint ... However, doing so should not put a disproportionate burden on business and should not have the effect of undermining competitiveness and discouraging investment."

The most important thing—there's another report this week. I'm not finished reading it, but it is worth looking at. These reports are not a futile effort by the government. It's an acknowledgement that, "Houston, we have a problem." This one here is Achieving Balance, and it's on the long-term energy plan. Our critic called it the short-term long-term energy plan because we know that the economy is in trouble.

One of the things we've heard from almost every company, whether it's Caterpillar or General Motors—all

these companies are moving to the States. They're not stopping building cars or tractors; they're just building them in a place that has a more competitive environment for investment. We're buying those same things at Home Depot or Walmart or wherever people shop. But in this report—it is important, and this is going to be another filing.

One of the most important writers on the whole issue of energy is Parker Gallant. He's not some political person. Now, here's the real, true story of what's happening on the energy file. Energy as a cost of production is about 35%. You look at the industries in Canada that are stumbling; they're the ones that are big users of energy. The auto sector, steel, petrochemical and forestry are all big users. In fact, I would say Cliffs Resources moved out of here quick because we have uncompetitive rates. It's not me saying it. These are experts saying it. In fact, if you want to look at the real story—the minister said this too, but he doesn't tell you the entire story. This report is "Low Voltage Policy," on the Ontario electricity pricing system. It's written by the Globe. It's an assessment of this report—and I've only got a few minutes here. I wish I had an hour.

Here's what it says: that this year, the—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): And I would ask you if you would tie it to Bill 105 quickly.

Mr. John O'Toole: This is a suggestion, an amendment to Bill 105. It's too late for that now.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): But you've now strayed off for three minutes.

Mr. John O'Toole: All right. Just on this, I'll finish off on the energy file, because this year it's 9%. In 2016, it's going to be a 15% increase, and in 10 years it'll be 50% more. That's the cost of doing business in Ontario. It's about jobs. It's about Bill 105. Bill 105 is tinkering with toys. It's a shell game brought on by the NDP as an appeasement to the budget.

Laughter.

Mr. John O'Toole: They may laugh, but—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, it is. This is not humorous. I'm worried about the economy, as some of the experts are. It's not me. I'm just forwarding information for your review.

I'm going to go back to Bill 105 because Bill 105 simply doesn't get the job done. How can we disagree with giving them at least what—the two parties that are running this province collectively—the "coalition government," I call it—have agreed that they're going to exempt up to \$450,000. But the problem is, they're probably going to increase some other regulatory thing where you don't qualify.

They'll have to hire several accountants, first of all, at some ministry to figure out where these thresholds are. They'll have to file reports on all their payroll now. So we're going to have several new people all making about \$100,000 with a new computer and all this stuff to analyze and investigate. It's almost like the College of Trades. They're going to be at the business with the

uniform and the company car outside with the trillium on the side of it, probably with the motor running, and go in to give you a ticket about the haircut—the best story I've heard is about the barber. But Bill 105 simply does not get the job done.

I see that most people have left—

Mr. Bob Delaney: You're not allowed to say that.

Mr. John O'Toole: I shouldn't say that because it's announcing that there are not too many people listening. But I would say this: We did put eight amendments forward, all in good faith, because we are on the record during the debate as supporting Bill 105, on the condition of some receptivity of a financial amendment, some acknowledgement. They could have dealt with it through the electricity rate. In fact, if you look at one of our Pathways to Prosperity papers—we've tabled them with the House. They're public documents. These are recommendations for discussion. One of them deals with the energy rate, but it also deals with the employer health tax. We have thresholds that we feel that new business—new business start-ups, built together with hiring policies. Job creation is the number one job in Ontario. Without that, how do we pay for all the wonderful services we feel we're entitled to?

I have heard speeches on all sides of this debate and cannot find a substantive reason to not vote for it, except that it doesn't go far enough. I want that to be my remark on this part of the bill, with—because I understand that the moment you cut revenue, and it doesn't provide the outcomes you want, which is more employment, then you've got less revenue and you're in a deeper hole.

So I ask them in their rebuttals to come up with some ideas so that we can talk about the economic implications of Bill 105, and they can relate it even to Bill 141, which I think is important. I thought the Minister of Transportation spoke quite well on infrastructure this morning. I tended to agree with him, and our critic, Mr. Klees, did as well.

Bill 105, though, in itself—the new legislation also means that businesses with \$5 million or more in payroll will no longer be able to claim a tax exemption even on the first \$400,000. This is revenue-neutral, really. They're going to get more from the big guys, but if they move, though, like Caterpillar, they won't get that either. Do you understand?

It was supposed to be a revenue-neutral outcome, and it isn't. We've looked at it. Businesses that are going to be affected by this—it's good to put a picture in people's mind. The Canadian Tire store—you'll probably be there buying a Christmas tree, some lights or some other kind of decorations—that is a typical store that employs local people and is usually owned by local people. I know the ones in my riding of Durham. There are three of them, and I think of Higgins in Uxbridge. He's involved in everything in making his community better and safer, and employs students and the rest of it. These are the people who won't get it—they won't get any of this; in fact, they're going to be paying more, because there's no exemption, not even on the first \$400,000.

1740

Why would they put the poison pill in there? If it's good, then it should be fair. You know what I mean? I'm losing faith, I'm losing confidence in Premier Wynne's ability to lead the province. I don't want to be mean. It's not personal. I've seen the video of her running, "I'm different," whatever. And that's fine.

I think everyone here recognizes—first of all, here's the simple analysis for the young pages here, and next week is their last week: no economy, no quality of life. It's pretty raw, but if there's a loss in the economy, if families don't have a job—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): A point of order, the member from Mississauga East—Cooksville.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Speaker, I've been listening to the member from Durham, and every once in a while he throws in Bill 105. A lot of what he's speaking about is not Bill 105, but just for safety, he throws in the name—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): —I'm also listening very—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I've just lost—maybe I could get a little bit more time, because I don't want to be so harsh—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I don't think you need it.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's about finding the balance. At the end of the day, you have to find a balance. Our problem is that we have the highest unemployment rate of any province in Canada. That should be a signal to you: "Houston, we have a problem."

All I'm saying to you is, this is a small tool, Bill 105; if it's that good for small, it should be big for bigger. I'm saying we should go further and go faster so that we have jobs for all the young people.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I just want to stand and say I have such incredible affection for the member from Durham. We were discussing the member from Durham, I have to admit, and his comments, and my friend from Toronto—Danforth said, "He's positively James Joycean in his stream of consciousness about bills," which I have to say is true.

But I would also say that he's responsible—if you've never had a conversation with him—for some of the best one-liners ever. Some cannot be shared in this House, but one can, so I'm going to share it. He described what we do here. As he said, "What we do here is Hollywood for ugly people." I think that's pretty funny.

So, on the comments of the member from Durham, who never runs out of comments, who can speak to any bill for any length of time given him—and yes, the member across the way was correct: He does occasionally throw in the title of the bill, and that keeps the stream of consciousness going. We are incredibly entertained by

him, and this late in the afternoon on a Thursday, I say bravo to the member from Durham for managing to keep us awake and entertained, whatever he's talking about. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

The Minister of Consumer Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, Speaker. When I think about Bill 105, I think about what the reality is in our constituency offices. The reality is, we have many small businesses, and that's what makes up our economy in Ontario. We need to recognize that. It's not always the big companies; it's the small companies—100 employees or less, 50 or less, 20 or less—that make up our economy.

Speaking of the economy, I know the member from Durham. I know him quite well because I live in Durham region where he lives, so I too enjoy working with him on the local scene from time to time. But I do have to highlight that his comments about the Roger Martin report need to be put in some sort of context. So, if I may, in response to his I think more negative comments, I'd like to quote the Martin report, page 10 exactly, which says:

"Ontario's tax system is now one of the most business-friendly in the OECD. Thanks to the adoption of the harmonized sales tax, the elimination of the capital tax, and reductions in the marginal effective tax rate, Ontario businesses are well-positioned to thrive in a competitive environment. The task force applauds the Ontario government for implementing the necessary changes to make Ontario's tax system smarter."

This bill before us will continue to move in that direction. You know, bring on the ideas, bring on the suggested changes, but let's work together. Let's get this bill to committee, where it belongs, and we'll go from there.

Mr. Michael Prue: It has been to committee.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Oh, it has been to committee? Sorry. Sorry.

Interjection.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: It's okay; I'll correct myself. It has been to committee. This is third reading. I apologize; I came in later.

Let's finalize this bill. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Questions and comments? The member for Cambridge.

Mr. Rob Leone: Well, Mr. Speaker, I just want to commend the member for Durham for his, I think, eloquent speech at times, and at times it could be described as erratic. But nonetheless, I think what we've learned today is that this bill, which in its title is supposed to support small business, leaves much to be desired.

I know the member for Durham is very well read and researched. He reads almost everything that comes across his desk. I was sitting beside him during his remarks

today and he has got notes frantically written everywhere. So how he pieces together a cogent communication and speech remains quite the mystery to me.

I think we've seen the two solitudes with the remarks we've seen today from the veteran member for Durham and the—and I don't say this in a negative sense, because I am a rookie as well—member from Scarborough-Guildwood. We've seen the two solitudes in how to give a speech late on Thursday afternoon.

But I think at the heart of what the member for Durham was saying, and perhaps he can comment on this when he gives his last two minutes, is that this Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act, leaves much to be desired for business. Whether it is on the regulation and red tape, which he spoke very passionately about—and, let's face it, regulation and red tape in our small businesses is costing millions and billions of dollars, probably. I think something does have to legitimately be done about that. If we are making questions and comments on this bill and having our debate through third reading here, we should be talking about those kinds of costs. Yes, there is a small reduction in costs for some small businesses, but there are massive costs in other areas that certainly need to be taken into consideration. So I look forward to the debate and thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. At this late hour of the night, I too would like to stand up and commend my friend from Durham for the speech that he just made. As always, I listened to him intently, because there are gems and pearls of wisdom spaced throughout his speech. I agree with my colleagues who have said you have to pick and choose those parts that are good and get away from the extraneous stuff, but I always find the extraneous stuff to be interesting as well, especially when he strayed into the whole thing about energy policy and how much money was going to be lost by the citizens and businesses. He tried to bring that back, I think, to Bill 105, to point out the difference between an energy policy that will cost thousands of dollars to the average business and this bill, which will give some \$900 or \$945 or \$975, depending on who you listen to when they're actually speaking, in terms of extra funds.

Earlier, the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville said I made a statement which I don't remember making. I don't think it's a picayune amount; I think it's an important amount, \$945, that's going to flow to small businesses. I know my friend from Durham doesn't say exactly the same thing, but I do also recognize that \$945 for many businesses is not going to be the difference between success and failure. Is \$945 important for putting an extra ad in a newspaper to try to get people into your shop or restaurant? Of course it is. Is it going to make the difference between whether they succeed or not? I doubt it very much.

So when I have a chance to speak and start my speech in a few minutes, I will be remembering what the

member from Durham had to say. I will try not to deviate from Bill 105, and I hope I'll be successful at it, but I commend, as always, the member for Durham for his insightful thoughts towards whatever bill is up here in the list.

1750

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Durham, you have two minutes.

Mr. John O'Toole: I do really appreciate the somewhat awkward compliments that I received from my colleague from Parkdale–High Park, my friend from the Ministry of Consumer Services, my colleague from Cambridge, as well as the member from Beaches–East York.

Sometimes we're only sort of expounding on a simple bill of two pages really and trying to relate it to the broader discussion of jobs and the economy. It's in that context that we can all use numbers to justify what we're saying, but you have to put them into context. I think the best context right now is just a statement on our economy; the last quarterly report that we had at the update is an example. I'm not trying to be mean. I'm just saying you've got to face the news and the music. That's where we are.

In question period I don't often hear sensible responses. In fact, I do question it sincerely. A very good article on the energy file—this is worth reading—is by Parker Gallant, and it's in the Post. He says that it's costing us \$1.2 billion to export renewable energy that's produced in off-peak time. We're spending—where actually the cost per kilowatt hour is 10.5 cents and the export price is about 2.5 cents, so we're losing 8 cents per kilowatt hour. With the amount measured through the IESO site, we're losing \$1.2 billion. That's the reality of the energy policy we've found ourselves in in Ontario.

It does relate to Bill 105 because Bill 105 is extensively trying to find relief for small business. I'm saying we should find relief for all business.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I think, mercifully, for everyone who is here tonight, I won't get my whole hour in, but I guess I'm going to start now and get about 10 minutes in, and we'll finish the rest of the speech at some other time.

A great many things have been said both by the government and by my colleagues in the Conservative Party about this bill and the genesis of the bill and that it was an NDP bill and all of those things—in fact, all of those things are kind of true. So I'd just like to preface my remarks about the bill itself with how it came that you're finding this debate on the floor here today.

This was an idea that the NDP has had for some time. This was an idea that we thought of as a revenue bill to the government. It was not a bill to help small business, as it was originally set out. What happened in the lead-up to the budget and the lead-up to the compromises that were made and the lead-up to this bill coming in in its present form was that the NDP suggested getting rid of the employer health tax for those corporations that had

more than 100 employees or \$5 million in sales, and that we should not be subsidizing those large corporations, those large companies, because they didn't need the money. They too were getting \$400,000 of relief on the first \$400,000 of their payroll that they didn't need.

We gave examples, like the banks, the insurance companies, General Motors and all those companies that did not need that \$945 and, in fact, could do well without it. Our proposal—the initial proposal that went to the government and got modified into Bill 105—was very different, because what we said was that we should continue to do it for small business and keep it at \$400,000 because small business could use the exemption of that amount of money and they could use it to good purpose for hiring people or running the business or keeping their heads above water. But for the big businesses, they didn't need it anymore.

The government sort of half listened to us. They said, "Okay. The big guys aren't going to get it anymore, and the little guys, we're going to put the ceiling up to \$450,000." The net effect of that was that it was more or less revenue-neutral. The suggestion that we had made would have saved the treasury some \$90 million. We thought that the \$90 million was far better spent in either paying down the deficit or in some social programs around housing or welfare costs or people in poverty, some other good purpose that it might be used for.

Now, the government in its wisdom determined the best way to do it, to take that \$90 million, was to give it to small business. Hence, this is how we got this act before us. So I thank my friends in the Conservative Party for saying it was an NDP bill, but it was not this bill. This is a government bill. This is different from what we had suggested, and I'm not sure that it is as good, because if you take a look at it—and I'm not going to say it's a picayune amount, as my friend from Mississauga East–Cooksville suggested I said; it's not. But it is not an amount of money that is going to make a fundamental difference to most businesses. Will they use or do they want the \$945? Of course they do. No one is going to deny for a minute that a barbershop, a hairdresser, a little restaurant struggling, a brand new little computer store with a couple of people working in it, or the hundreds of other stores and enterprises across this province won't welcome the money. The reality is, though, that it's not going to make that much of a difference to them in terms of finding themselves in solvency or insolvency. So that was the genesis of the idea; this is what we thought.

We think that the government has an obligation, in all things, to try to reduce the deficit. Sometimes my friends in the Conservative Party are agog when they hear me talking like this, but as a former mayor I think it is important that we spend within our means and that we manage our accounts and that we try to reduce that deficit, which is unsustainable in the long term, at \$1.1 billion. That's why, when I went to the finance committee and made this suggestion, which is the genesis of this bill, it was actually to be a government revenue tool, not revenue-neutral—just so everybody's clear.

Having said that, we found ourselves with this bill. This is a good bill, and if I had to give the \$90 million to somebody, I think that giving it to small business is not the worst thing we could do with it, because many of the small businesses in this province are finding things difficult. Costs are rising for them, just as they are rising for consumers. The cost of electricity, the cost of taxes, the cost of MPAC coming in and saying, "Your property is about to increase," are causing some very real difficulties. These businesses are looking for support or help from wherever they can get it, and if they're getting it from the \$90 million that in my view should have gone to the deficit, I'm sure they're more than happy to get it that way.

This bill has been somewhat contentious, which surprised me. I didn't think it was going to be all that contentious. When we started out, I remember that at second reading when I stood up to do my one-hour lead-off, I talked about all the revenue tools that the province might have had at its disposal if the government had listened more to the NDP instead of just seizing upon this one little thing in terms of helping small business. When I started, I thought, "Here's an idea; this is going to go through fairly rapidly." To my chagrin, this did not happen. This has taken a long time in debate through second reading.

It was fairly rapid through the committee process, but I'm going to talk about the committee process in a moment. Now we're back here, and I don't know how long this debate is going to last. I would hope against hope that we can finalize this before we break for Christmas because I would like to see this in the tax regime so that people in small business might see some benefit of it next year. But having said that, it had to wend its way, and there was interminable debate here and of course we pride ourselves on being able to say what is necessary to be said in this elegant and wonderful chamber. But in the end, it finally made its way to committee after considerable debate and, I think, a lot of debate. I don't remember there being all that much opposition to this bill at any stage during the debate.

Then we went to committee, and although I could not go to committee yesterday—I'm on the finance committee normally but I could not get there because I had to be in the legislative committee dealing with my own private member's bill. Mr. Speaker, you were there, and quite eloquent there as well, Mr. Speaker, if I might say. That's where I was tied up.

During the course of the debate in the finance committee, I had to read the—I don't know whether I was appalled or amused when I saw the Conservative amendments to the bill. I know they didn't pass, but I'd like to read them into the record because these are the kinds of things that go on here, and I think people need to know. Am I going to have to save this for the next day, Mr. Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I think you should save it.

Mr. Michael Prue: Okay, I can save this till the next day. I thank everyone for their patience.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): This House stands adjourned until Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bas Balkissoon, Grant Crack
Vic Dhillon, Garfield Dunlop
Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
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Toby Barrett, Lorenzo Berardinetti
France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Bill Mauro, Phil McNeely
Norm Miller, John O'Toole
Jagmeet Singh
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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John Fraser, Monte Kwinter
Jane McKenna, Rick Nicholls
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Bill Walker
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Bas Balkissoon, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Ernie Hardeman
Rod Jackson, Helena Jaczek
Paul Miller
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Select Committee on Developmental Services / Comité spécial
sur les services aux personnes ayant une déficience
intellectuelle**

Chair / Présidente: Laura Albanese
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson
Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor
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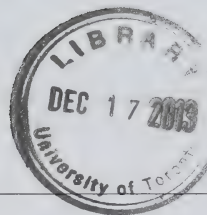
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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 40th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 9 December 2013

Lundi 9 décembre 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 9 December 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 9 décembre 2013

The House met at 1030.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Let us pray.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Our page captain today is Jonathan Arta Yapeter, and we will be joined by his mother, Janny, in the public gallery.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: It is my pleasure to introduce a number of doctors from the Scarborough Hospital and the Rouge Valley hospital. We have Dr. Naresh Mohan, chief of staff for Rouge Valley hospital; Dr. Robert Ting, president of the medical staff association of the Scarborough Hospital; and Dr. Jordan Cheskes, vice-president of the medical staff society for the Rouge Valley Health System. Welcome, doctors, to Queen's Park.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to welcome the family of page captain Michaela Knechtel: her parents, Joanne and Clare Knechtel.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'd like to introduce my son, Damien, and his girlfriend, Raki.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Today, it's a privilege for me to recognize, in the members' east gallery, Jessica Rosenbloom, who is visiting us here today to learn more about the legislative process and to see first-hand what it's like to be a member of provincial Parliament.

Jess is actually a grade 5 student at Louis-Honoré Fréchette Public School in Thornhill. I understand that her favourite pastimes are breakdancing, playing sports and walking her dog, Lucy. She is joined today by her mother, Karen Trainoff; her brother, Ari Nusbaum; Cristin Napier; Krista Orendorff; Sumi Shan; and Sugeevan Shan.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to recognize William Renton, from the Woodstock Police Service, who is in the gallery today. Bill has been a big help to me on public safety issues, and I want to welcome him to Queen's Park.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'd also like to introduce Helen Walker, who is the case manager in my constituency office in Pickering-Scarborough East. She organized a meeting today with the doctors attending from Rouge Valley and the Scarborough Hospital. Thank you, Helen, and welcome to Queen's Park for the first time.

Mr. Rob Leone: I'd like to welcome to the Legislative Assembly my new consistency assistant Eric Kroetsch to the Legislature.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'd like to welcome the parents of one of my policy advisers, Dina Stigas: her father, Clement Stigas, was an electrician who worked for the TTC for over 34 years, and her mother, Anna, worked for the Toronto District School Board for over 23 years. Welcome to the Legislature.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's my pleasure to welcome Eric and Sarah from Humberview Secondary School. They are job-shadowing me today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park, fresh from a tour of southeast Asia, Jonathan Sweeney-Bergen from Oakville.

ORAL QUESTIONS

LABOUR POLICY

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question this morning is to the Acting Premier. Acting Premier, under the McGuinty-Wynne government, Ontario has lost 300,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs. But that's not all. Not only are we losing jobs at an alarming rate, but for those who have jobs in Ontario's private sector, wage growth is dead last in the entire country. While workers in Saskatchewan, Alberta, Newfoundland and Nunavut are seeing wages climb on a yearly basis, Ontario workers' take-home pay remains stagnant and well below average.

While your government has blown this off as a mere transition, in fact, only Tim Hudak and the PCs have put forward a plan to create jobs, grow our economy and modernize our labour policies.

Minister, your government is simply limping from crisis to crisis. Why don't you have a full-time jobs plan for Ontario, and why do you believe it's okay for Ontario workers to be dead last when it comes to wage growth in this country?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think the member opposite knows this, but just in case he doesn't, we've actually had a net increase of 474,000 jobs. So they can focus on the losses, but those losses have been far more than replaced—in fact, a net gain of 474,000 jobs. I think all of us were delighted to see the job numbers that came out last week.

Speaker, what is passing strange, though, is this focus on the right-to-work-for-less approach of the party opposite. They talk about increasing income for people, but they're taking an approach that has been shown time and time again to reduce income for people. In fact, some

very prominent members of his own party have come out against this plan.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the Acting Premier: You can spin the numbers all you want, but the fact remains that Ontario has lost over 25,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs since Kathleen Wynne has become the Premier. The Heinz plant in Leamington is just another example of your careless approach to Ontario's manufacturing industry, and sadly, it won't be the last.

Minister, while you were busy patting yourself on the back, Ontario's government unions, like OPSEU, have grown by over 300,000 new members, while Ontario's private sector unions continue to face layoffs and job losses, losing 100,000 members over the same 10-year period. Minister, over those same 10 years, OPSEU elitist Warren "Smokey" Thomas has forcibly extracted over \$500 million in annual dues from his membership. Why does your government choose to stand with union elites like Smokey Thomas instead of the one million people who are out of work in Ontario today?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Sit down, please.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, again, it's strange that the party opposite is advocating further job loss: 2,000 nurses they want to fire. They want to fire 10,000 education workers. That's a job plan that I don't think the people of Ontario want to see.

But let's see what other prominent Progressive Conservatives have to say about your right-to-work-for-less plan. What John Tory says is, "I don't think it's constructive right now." He says, "I think it's probably the wrong thing to be advocating, and I don't even think it's going to be that good for the economy." That's your former leader, John Tory.

1040

But if that's not good enough, let's talk about Nick Kouvalis—I think you probably know him; he's a prominent Conservative. He says, "If PC members are largely split on right-to-work legislation, then this is not a winner with the general population."

Speaker, the member opposite would know that Alberta, under Ralph Klein, looked into this and decided against it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Final supplementary.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the Acting Premier: As you know, union elites like Smokey Thomas forcibly extract hundreds of millions of dollars from their members without providing any disclosure or transparency as to where and how that money is spent. It is outdated practices like these that led to my launching of our OPSEU opt-out website this morning. OPSEU opt-out is an opportunity for current and retired OPSEU members to go online, leave their comments and feedback, and let

us know why they want to opt out of their government union today.

Minister, Ontario's middle class has been completely gutted under your Liberal government's watch. When will Ontario move forward, stop standing with union elites like Smokey Thomas and instead remove unnecessary barriers to job creation and modernize our labour policies like Europe, Australia, the UK and most of the United States have already done?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I'm really baffled by the assertions that the member opposite continues to make when it comes to job creation in this province, because what he is talking about is absolutely a job killer in terms of what will happen in this province if they got to bring in their right-to-work-for-less type of policies that they continue to talk about.

The facts are very clear, Speaker, if you look at the United States and where they are. The states that have right-to-work-for-less types of legislation—what we have seen is that there is a net loss of jobs, there is a reduction in wages and benefits for both unionized and non-unionized workers, and not to mention there are weaker health and safety laws.

We will not ascribe to those kinds of anti-worker, anti-Ontario policies, and we reject their job-killer plan.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Sit down, please. Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. All right, we're starting to raise the temperature. I want to keep it down.

The member for Nepean—Carleton.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Good morning, Minister. On Saturday, hundreds of people protested your office. They are angry and fed up with increased hydro rates caused by poor government decisions by yourself and others over there. But the straw that broke the camel's back was quite simply when the Minister of Energy compared the cancellation of the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants to merely a "cup of coffee." As one protestor put it, "It's not just a cup of coffee.... It's one of our most basic monthly" bills. "I'm just working to pay" them.

This careless comparison by the minister proves without a shadow of a doubt that the Liberal Party is not sorry for wasting \$1.1 billion in the last election. It also proves the Premier only apologized because she got caught.

Will the minister stand in this place and apologize for that careless characterization of the gas plants and that \$2 cup—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Minister of Energy.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. Sit down, please.

Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, last week the justice committee was discussing the costs associated with the relocation of the Oakville gas plant. The relocation costs have been verified by the Auditor General, and I have said and our party has said that the relocation costs were unacceptably high.

The chair of the Ontario Power Authority provided information to the committee that the rate base portion of the Oakville relocation would cost the ratepayer, for the 20-year recovery period, between \$1 and \$2 per year, Mr. Speaker. That was from the chair of the Ontario Power Authority.

But I wonder, to those 60 or 70 demonstrators who were in front of my constituency office, Mr. Speaker, whether the member for Nepean–Carleton told them what her leader, Tim Hudak, said when asked if he would freeze or lower rates. He said, “I will not do that.”

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Well, what the 300-plus protesters told me in front of his office is that they can't afford to send any more cups of coffee to Bob Chiarelli, Kathleen Wynne and Dalton McGuinty. They told me that they didn't wake up during the 2011 election campaign and say, “Gee, I wish I could buy the Liberals a cup of coffee for the next 20 years.” No, they told me that they are having a rough time paying their hydro bills because this government needed to win five seats in the GTA. In fact, it wasn't just the protesters that were seniors and family members; it was also the small businesses who were there that were telling me they are going to have to lay people off or shut their doors entirely because of this Liberal government's terrible and disastrous decisions.

The protest on the weekend is just the beginning. I know we're going to hear more in the next couple of weeks. How does this Liberal government expect to create jobs and retain the ones that we have already got in Ontario if their energy policy is the single biggest factor driving jobs away?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'm sure the member didn't tell those 70 or 80 demonstrators the number of mitigation measures we have to reduce the payments on their electricity bills, and she voted against every single one of them.

With respect to industrial prices, Ontario's industrial rates compare favourably with other jurisdictions, despite what she shouts. Industrial rates in northern Ontario are among the lowest in Canada, and lower than 44 American states. Industrial rates in southern Ontario are lower than in Alberta, Michigan, New Jersey and California, and in line with states like New York, Virginia and Tennessee.

Mr. Speaker, they continue to state facts which are totally untrue. They talk about Heinz leaving because of energy prices. Heinz actually had their own generation on-site. They were not paying an electricity bill.

They've got to come straight with the facts.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Final supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The biggest mitigation in making sure that we can control energy costs in this province is by removing that party from office. It's difficult to trust this government. You look at them every day; they contradict themselves. They contradict the facts with respect to industrial energy pricing. Every major corporation will tell you they're wrong. The Premier contradicted herself last week in the gas plants committee, including all of the bureaucrats. This minister here couldn't even tell us last week whether the energy rates that are going up included the cancelled gas plants. It's like a bad episode of Hogan's Heroes over there. They know not of what they speak.

I can tell you one thing: In the next six months, Ontarians will have a choice. They can continue to choose that party that puts politics over people's energy policy, or they can choose a party, the Progressive Conservative Party under Tim Hudak, that understands energy pricing in the province of Ontario, knows how to bring the jobs back and actually has a plan on the floor of the assembly. Will the minister adopt our plan, say enough is enough and apologize to the people of this province?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Will the member tell the people, and did she tell those 50 or 60 people in front of my constituency office, that she and her party are going to proceed with a \$15-billion investment in new nuclear that will make the rates skyrocket?

Did she tell the people in front of my constituency office that she and her party voted against these programs: the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit, a 10% discount off the bottom line; the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit, which saves qualifying individuals up to \$963 per year, with a maximum of \$1,097 per year for qualifying seniors? That member and her party voted against those price mitigations that reduced electricity bills, and she should be embarrassed for voting against what's going to help electricity ratepayers.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question to the Minister of Energy: According to the Auditor General, the province sells electricity exports at a loss. Between 2005 and 2011, the loss was \$1.8 billion.

Can the minister explain to consumers paying the highest electricity prices in Canada why Ontario is selling electricity at a loss?

1050

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The member should know that, first of all, from the opposition party, they had accrued a deficit in electricity. They had been importing at the cost of close to \$1 billion a year.

We invested heavily in the sector, to make sure that we had a surplus. Because we have a surplus now, the member should be aware of how trading in electricity works. Yes, sometimes we sell electricity cheaply; much

more do we sell it at a profit. From 2008 to today, the IESO will confirm to him—I'll arrange a meeting for him; we can go through the books—we generated a \$6-billion profit in the sale of electricity.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Minister, for families, it's just another example of a system that isn't working. They saw the Liberal government spend over \$1 billion cancelling private power deals, spend millions more signing contracts for nuclear expansion plans that were never going ahead. The only way to get affordable electricity from Ontario is to move outside the province. Does the minister think that makes sense?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'd like to read a quote that I'm sure will be of interest to the critic from the NDP. It's from Larry Alderice of the Power Workers' Union: "It was great to hear that nuclear power ... will continue to play a key role in sustaining the province's energy needs into the future." He's referring to refurbishment, Mr. Speaker.

"The ... units provide a reliable source of safe, clean and low-cost electricity, while also providing a source of highly skilled jobs. The commitment to nuclear in the long-term energy plan will secure great jobs for our current employees and hopefully will open the door for more employment opportunities into the future." Twenty-five thousand more jobs, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Final supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, Speaker, I guess answer period is not going to be part of today's agenda.

The government talks about doing things differently, but all people see is a lot more of the same status-quo thinking, and bills keep climbing higher. Instead of clamping down on private power deals, or reining in the growing number of hydro agencies and their CEO salaries or taking some action to ensure that Ontario isn't exporting electricity for cheap while charging people more and more at home, the government offers more of the same. Does the minister think that's good enough?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The member knows that we invested heavily to put ourselves back into a surplus. We've invested heavily to make the system clean. We've totally abolished dirty coal-burning generation. That takes \$4.4 billion off the bottom line of the province's expenses in environmental and health care costs.

But in the meantime, because of the pressure on prices, we introduced a number of price mitigation measures which that party voted against in some cases. The Ontario Clean Energy Benefit takes 10% off the bottom line. The Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit saves qualifying individuals up to \$963 per year with the maximum of \$1,097 per year for qualifying seniors.

That member should look in the mirror and ask himself why he wanted to deprive our seniors of up to \$1,000 a year off their electricity bills. That was totally irresponsible.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Catherine Fife: Earlier this morning, the government issued yet another vague announcement about reining in public sector CEO salaries. Will the government set a hard cap for executive salaries—

Interjection: Who's the question to?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I said to the Acting Premier.

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yes, I did, but you were yelling.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. If I could ask the member to at least be clear who she's addressing the question to.

Ms. Catherine Fife: To the Acting Premier: Earlier this morning, the government issued yet another vague announcement about reining in public sector CEO salaries. Will the government set a hard cap for executive salaries at twice the level of the Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Government Services.

Hon. John Milloy: There was nothing vague about this morning's announcement. We talked about the fact that the government will be moving forward with legislation in the spring when the House returns, which will outline ways in which we can establish a framework, including hard caps, for public sector salaries.

The fact of the matter is—and I think the leader of the third party learned last week with her rather ill-fated press conference—that this is a technical matter. It involves study of what goes on in other jurisdictions. We want to make sure that broader public sector salaries are fair, but they also have to reflect what is needed in that particular situation.

As I told the House the other week, the honourable leader of the party, in her press conference, cited an example and then had to swallow herself whole by saying, "Well, maybe there's an exception for that."

This is not a political ploy. We are actually going to have the work done, and we are going to come forward with a framework which allows for fairness in terms of salaries in the broader public sector.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Protecting the taxpayers of Ontario is not a technical issue. This question is to the Acting Premier. While people feel like they've been falling further behind, they've watched as executives in the public sector have seen their paycheques grow by leaps and bounds. The province promised action, but all we see is yet another plan to have a plan. The minister talks about a hard cap on CEO salaries. If he means what he says, can he tell us what he's going to cap them at?

Hon. John Milloy: As I said, we are going to come forward—this is a very clear commitment that we will come forward with legislation that will give government

the authority to establish frameworks going forward. I would stress to the honourable member that those are frameworks for the entire package that senior members of the broader public sector receive, which includes salary, which includes perks and which includes severance arrangements.

I note that the NDP bill, which the honourable member likes to talk about, did not deal with perks and did not deal with severance. This is a broad study that will take place and will result in a framework. What this legislation does is give government the power to impose caps and to impose a framework. This is the responsible course of action. It is a firm commitment that that legislation will be forthcoming when the House returns in the new year.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Final supplementary.

Ms. Catherine Fife: People are tired of watching as public sector CEOs get pay hikes that are worth more than what most families earn every year. Two years ago, this government said they backed a hard cap at twice the pay of the Premier—two years ago. But they also saw every Liberal MPP vote against the plan put forward by Andrea Horwath to cap salaries at twice the pay of the Premier, joined by the PCs. Now they are making promises again, but without any details of what the cap will be. Why should people believe the minister this time?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, let's talk about the New Democratic Party's bill. The leader of the third party went out and held a press conference. In the press conference, she had to swallow herself whole by outlining an individual who received a substantial salary, who she had to admit would have an exception under her bill. This isn't about exceptions; this is about a proper framework.

The other difference between our measures and those put forward by the third party is that the third party talked about just the salary. We want to look at perks. We want to look at issues like severance. We want to look at the entire package. This is a complex matter. It's a technical matter. What this bill will do is give government the power to put in force a framework, including hard caps, in a responsible way, which makes sure that taxpayers' money is properly used by the broader public sector.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Acting Premier. We've been holding economic round tables all throughout Ontario, and the news is quite disturbing. We're seeing company after company pulling up stakes in Ontario and heading to more open-for-business territories. Your high taxes, unaffordable energy and red tape are sending these businesses packing. How many US Steel, Caterpillar and Heinz announcements do you need to hear before you actually change the direction Ontario is headed?

Acting Premier, we're in crisis mode here in Ontario. When are you going to do something for our struggling business community?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I recognize that the member opposite is making reference to a number of initiatives with his right-to-work legislation, things that are actually going to kill jobs in our province. We won't stand for that on this side of the House. We're going to take the initiatives necessary to protect those workers for health and safety reasons, and at the same time provide highly valued jobs. That's why our jobs plan includes investing in people and ensuring that they have the skills necessary to succeed. We're going to continue to invest strategically in infrastructure and those initiatives that create jobs—over 100,000 more as a result—and a dynamic business climate.

1100

Even Roger Martin says, "Ontario's well-educated and active labour force is one of its best assets, and also one of its primary sources of economic potential"—and that was just done last month.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Acting Premier, what I'm referring to, actually, are your high taxes, your red tape and your unaffordable energy, which are driving businesses out of Ontario—and that's before your energy minister's announcement that our already-tripled hydro rates are set to skyrocket over the next five years. It's not very encouraging news for businesses or for families or for seniors.

In northern Ontario, Xstrata Copper closed, terminated 672 employees and moved 115 kilometres over the border, into Quebec, for cheaper hydro.

There are 60 mills in the north that are closed—that's 80% of all the mills in the north—are gone, never to open again under this government.

Last week, Resolute Forest Products in Fort Frances shut down yet another paper line and sent 60 people home.

What is it going to take for you to finally get it?

Hon. Charles Sousa: What we have in this House right now is Bill 105, to support small business. I would look to the critic opposite to ensure that we pass that bill to help small businesses right across this province; over 90% would benefit.

The member opposite also makes reference to energy prices. What we had left over from the Conservative Party was a \$20-billion stranded debt. That's their legacy, and that is still being paid for today by the people of Ontario.

When it comes to taxes, "Ontario's tax system is now one of the most business-friendly in the OECD. Thanks to the adoption of the harmonized sales tax, the elimination of the capital tax, and reductions in the marginal effective tax rate, Ontario businesses are well-positioned to thrive in a competitive environment. The task force applauds the Ontario government for implementing the necessary changes to make Ontario's tax system smarter."

We are one of the lowest in the OECD countries. That's why countries and businesses are investing in our province.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. The committee has finally received the forensic audit document, the document that was completed in June 2012. It has been a year and a half. I find this time lapse unacceptable. The public has a right to know the contents of the audit of what went on at Ornge. When will the minister see fit to read the report and make it public?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I did have the opportunity to read the investigation report. As I've said many times in this House, I read the interim report. When I received the interim report, that was enough for me. What I read in that interim report made me realize the right place for this information was the Ontario Provincial Police. That is where that interim report went. That's where it belonged.

The committee has asked for the forensic investigation report, and they have now received that report. But I think it's worth noting that the committee has had the interim report for months and months and months.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Speaker, the result of the forensic audit belongs to the Minister of Health. She ordered it. She had a duty to read it. She had a duty to read from it, learn from it and make sure that it never happens again. It continues to show that the minister prefers to hide behind excuses rather than admit that she should have read the report and she should have released it to Ontarians.

There are no excuses for hiding information, for taking away transparency. This is taxpayers' dollars that went into the pockets of private enterprise and of greedy people at Ornge.

When will the minister finally make the report public to all so that everybody can see the money that was taken away, everybody can learn and everybody can make changes so that Ornge never happens again?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, as I have said before and I will say again, the ministry officials determined, in an abundance of caution, so as not to jeopardize an OPP investigation, that this document be held in the ministry and shared with Ornge. The ministry and Ornge carefully reviewed that document.

A very high priority for me, now that Ornge is on the right track, is to see that justice is done. I, in no way, want to jeopardize that investigation. A decision was made by officials. I tell you, I support that decision, and if that decision were made again today, I would still support that decision because the OPP investigation must be allowed to continue without any political interference or any perception of political interference.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. Like residents across

this province, those who live in Manitouwadge, a township in northern Ontario, turn to the provincial government to assist with resolving issues surrounding infrastructure.

A road in the municipality of Manitouwadge was designated as an industrial road in 1963 and operated as such until a forestry company withdrew from the industrial road agreement in late 2012. Unfortunately, the industrial partner ended operations in the area and significantly reduced its maintenance activities on the road in 2010. More recently, the road has been closed since July of this year due to a washout.

Mr. Speaker, what is the Minister of Transportation doing to help the residents of Manitouwadge access this important rural road?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's always great to have an engineer in caucus like my friend from Orléans, who pays such attention to detail in the infrastructure. I appreciate that.

This is Caramat Road that we're talking about in Manitouwadge. I have been working with and I want to acknowledge my friends the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and the Minister of Natural Resources.

This has been a complicated and challenging problem. As you know, the road washed out just a few months ago and it was not maintained. You're quite right; there's been a number of jurisdictional issues. It was an industrial, private road and it was a road nominally maintained by the Ministry of Natural Resources, and the municipality whose landfill is on this site has not been interested at all in taking the road over.

I'm pleased to announce that the Ministry of Transportation will open up the road, maintain it and work with the community to repair the full length of Caramat Road in the coming months.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: Back to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure: I'm pleased to hear that the minister was able to find a solution for the constituents of Manitouwadge. This is an important access point for the residents of Manitouwadge, and I know that they will greatly appreciate the support that our government is providing them. It is important that the needs of northern Ontario are heard and addressed.

This provides an opportunity to highlight what our government is doing in northern Ontario. A number of my colleagues, including the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, and the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, were in Timmins on Friday for the Northern Leaders' Forum. There was great discussion that emerged from that forum that was very positive for northern Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister please inform the Legislature how our government will continue to build on the positive momentum generated by the Northern Leaders' Forum in relation to infrastructure in northern Ontario?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, whether it's the seven kilometres that we're opening up right away to the

landfill for the community of Manitouwadge or working over the winter on the larger road, I want to thank all of my colleagues, particularly the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, for the Northern Leaders' Forum on Friday, where this and other issues were discussed.

We have over \$500 million, which I think is a record, going into northern roads and highways, our important twinning projects, working with northern development and mines and natural resources to open up those roads for the Ring of Fire and for the very quickly reviving forestry industry.

I want to thank Mayor MacEachern of Manitouwadge, in particular, and the council and the people for their patience, and for working with our ministry to resolve this issue, to get the landfill open and get those services available to the community.

HEALTH CARE

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Minister of Health. Ontarians in rural and northern Ontario find it very difficult to access the health care they need, especially in the winter months. Other provinces, like British Columbia, have introduced non-emergency medical transportation programs for people who live in rural and remote communities to make it easier to access their out-of-town medical appointments. British Columbia's Northern Health Connections program, run by Pacific Western Transportation, is so successful that the number of riders has doubled over eight years.

Minister, it's my understanding that Pacific Western has given a proposal to your ministry for consideration. Could you please give me a status report with respect to the proposal?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite raises a very important question, particularly in northern Ontario, and the issue is non-urgent patient transfer, people who need to be transported but they don't need the care available by paramedics in a fully equipped ambulance.

1110

This is an issue that I have spoken about many times, with the people of northwestern Ontario in particular. In fact, the North West LHIN is now working on resolving the issue so that people get the care they need, and we also get the right care, the most appropriate care. This work is under way right now.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Minister, we all know that northern Ontarians rely on the Northern Health Travel Grant, yet your government has increased spending for this grant by 133% without improved customer service. Ontarians are having to wait up to eight weeks to receive reimbursement for medical services, putting northerners out of hundreds of dollars.

Pacific Western Transportation has put forward a proposal that would both save money and improve service.

Minister, will you commit today to giving northern Ontarians more options when travelling distances for health care and adopt Pacific Western Transportation's proposal?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I find it interesting that the member opposite thinks there is one solution to this problem. In fact, it is much more complicated than that. What I will reiterate is that this is an issue that is being resolved, that the people in northwestern Ontario are working very hard to find the most appropriate solution for this particular issue.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Last Friday you gathered in Timmins, along with the Premier and others, for your Northern Leaders' Forum, where the Liberal cabinet and the Premier tried to tell northerners that everything is going to be better now.

But as we wake up on Saturday morning, we find out we still have no rail passenger service because your government confirmed, in fact, you're not going to do it. We still have the same bad forest tenure problems that we had before Kathleen Wynne became Premier. We still have the same—and actually worse—energy policies that we had before Ms. Wynne became the Premier of Ontario. We now are going to have a 33% increase in electricity over the next three years and our northern highways are still downloaded.

Can you tell me what is different come Saturday morning after the northern summit than there was Friday morning when you arrived?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: May I say to the member, you were there. You saw what a positive meeting it was in terms of the commitment we made to work with northern leaders—municipal, First Nation, Métis—moving forward on the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario. You heard the comments by northern leaders, such as Timmins mayor Tom Laughren, whom you represent, what an historic occasion this was.

Also, you heard certainly a commitment on my part as Minister of Northern Development and Mines that, indeed, we will continue to look at all options moving forward for the Ontario Northland transportation. We are committed, and I am committed as minister, to a sustainable and a viable ONTC, something that makes a lot of sense. We have changed the commitment from one of divestment to one of transformation. This was indeed an exciting day. Eight of my colleagues—the Premier was there as well—an historic, tremendous day in northern Ontario—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, as I said on Friday, nobody's going to say you're not welcome to northern Ontario. We're glad any time somebody comes to visit us. But what we're looking for is: Where's the beef? Where is there going to be change in the policies that this government has put forward that has hurt northern Ontario?

We lost Xstrata. Why? Because of high energy prices in the city of Timmins. We lost forestry jobs. Why? In large part due to your own forest tenure policies that your government put in place.

So I ask you again: Tell me one policy that you've changed from Friday morning to Saturday morning as a result of that northern summit.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: The member is being remarkably disingenuous, particularly related to the extraordinary work that we have done with northern leaders related to the northern Ontario growth plan. I think the member also knows, in terms of the Ontario Forest Tenure Modernization Act, we are now seeing involvement by First Nations in a way that we've never seen before in terms of management of our crown forests. We've seen new companies opening up and that's been an exciting—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. Minister, I would ask you to withdraw.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'll withdraw—oh, was it “disingenuous”? I'll withdraw. I didn't realize that was unparliamentary, Speaker.

We are working incredibly closely with our northern leaders, and Premier Wynne has made it very clear our commitment is absolutely not something we are just talking about. We're working with northerners. We've got a northern cabinet committee put in place so we can put a northern lens on all—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Answer?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: We had a cabinet meeting in Sault Ste. Marie several months ago. We were up there with eight of our colleagues, including the Premier, meeting with all northern leaders, First Nations and Métis to continue to move forward on all the economic development in the north—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: —including the Ring of Fire, including working on making the—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

The member for Etobicoke North.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Merci, monsieur le Président. Ma question est pour le ministre du Travail, l'honorable Yasir Naqvi, and I would appreciate an ingenuous answer.

As members of this Legislature are well aware, there has been for some time a global economic restructuring occurring. This, of course, affects manufacturing, goods, services, resource allocation, exchange rates, and, in particular, labour demand.

While the overall economy steps towards improvement, I still encounter constituents in my own riding of Etobicoke North who face particular challenges in the labour market. Though so many aspire, desire, seek and come to Ontario with the promise of a better life, a good job and assured prosperity for their families, nevertheless, particular obstacles remain: recruitment fees and

billing and a lack of protection under Ontario's strict rules of health and safety.

Speaker, would the minister please inform this chamber: Why are certain employers able to continue to circumvent Ontario's labour protections?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I appreciate the member from Etobicoke North's very important question. Our government is committed to standing up for Ontario's workers because safe and fair workplaces are the building blocks of a competitive and growing economy.

Speaker, as you may recall, just last week, the government tabled a bill to ensure that we are protecting vulnerable workers in our communities across the province. The bill is quite extensive. It makes it illegal for employers to charge temporary foreign workers recruitment fees or to take away their personal documents, like passports.

Also, the member from Etobicoke North will be happy to hear that we are requiring employers to provide information to their employees about employment standards rights, and we provide that information in 23 different languages besides English and French, languages like Tamil, Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, traditional and simplified Chinese and more.

Also, we are making sure that co-op students, trainees and unpaid learners are also covered by the Occupational Health and Safety Act through this legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I would like to say shukria—thank you—to the minister and commend him for his initiatives and commitment on this file. I will likely be able to return to my riding of Etobicoke North over the break and reassure my constituents that our government has heard their concerns, takes them seriously and has begun to act.

Speaker, safe and fair workplaces have been a hallmark of the province of Ontario. With such workplace guarantees, prospective employees can focus on earning their daily bread, providing for their family, stimulating the economy and ultimately building a more prosperous and just society.

Even so, unfortunately, I continue to hear from workers who have been taken advantage of by their employer: workers who have worked but who have nevertheless been left without pay, often with no recourse, remedy or redress. Such workers are often unaware of their full rights, and that, of course, is a recipe for disaster.

Would the minister please inform this chamber: What is the Ministry of Labour proposing to ensure that hard-working Ontarians are paid for the work they do?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: At its heart, this legislation is very much about making sure workers get paid for the work they have done and giving businesses who play by the rules a competitive advantage.

This bill, if passed, would remove the current \$10,000 cap on the recovery of unpaid wages from a Ministry of Labour order to pay. It would also increase the time limit to recover wages from six months or a year to two years, so workers will be able to get money that they are owed.

In terms of temp agencies, we should be very proud, because we were the first Parliament, the first government in all of Canada, to bring in legislation, in 2009. We are taking the next step in protecting workers who get employment through temp agencies.

The proposed legislation would extend joint liability for both unpaid wages and workplace injuries, encouraging every business to make sure that their workplaces are safe for all workers and that they are treated fairly.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Minister of Health. We know that the Auditor General's report on Ornge and the Ministry of Health was scathing about the lack of oversight on the part of the ministry over Ornge. Multi-millions of dollars were wasted, and the lack of oversight rests with the minister.

1120

Since then, we've heard often from the minister that things have changed. I'd like the minister to tell us how often she has met with the new chair and the CEO of Ornge. Can the minister tell us what the most recent financial statement of Ornge is and how much of a deficit is Ornge running this year? What will the total budget for Ornge be in this fiscal year?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, I'm very pleased to say that I meet regularly with the chair and with the CEO of Ornge. They are very fine people, providing very strong leadership at Ornge.

I can tell you that I'm looking forward to appearing before a committee on Wednesday, because I'm hopeful that at that committee meeting we'll be able to have conversations about the improvements in service at Ornge, although I suspect that might not be where the member opposite will want to take that conversation. But I look forward to getting a report from the committee. I look forward to getting the legislation passed.

Ornge is under new leadership. It's in a very strong position. It is saving lives every single day.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: I didn't hear anything about the numbers. Obviously, the minister hasn't read her briefing notes about Ornge and what the deficit is.

I'm going to make this actually very simple. This is a very recent document that Ornge issued, and it is an RFP for the replacement of the interiors of the AW139s. Speaker, this is going to involve multi-millions of new dollars for Ornge.

I'm going to ask the minister this very precise question: Has the minister read that RFP, and does the minister know what the cost of that new installation for the 10 AW139s will be and what will it do to the deficit that Ornge is running?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. Order. Sit down, please. I don't want to lose control.

Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What I'd like to know is, has the member opposite read any of the 1.5 million pages of documents that have been submitted to the committee? It's pretty clear he hasn't read the interim report of the forensic investigation, because they asked for it again. They already had it, and they asked for it again. I think that indicates maybe they didn't read it the first time.

But if the member opposite is suggesting that we do not replace the interiors, then I completely disagree with him. It's essential that patients being transported get the best possible care. That does require making changes to the interior, so I endorse Ornge moving forward with retrofitting the interiors of those helicopters, Speaker.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Deputy Premier as well. Autism Ontario and all clinical experts in the field recognize the overwhelming evidence that early intervention and services for children with autism are critical. However, Patricia Dunkley from Niagara Falls has been facing huge challenges in getting appropriate help for her four-year-old son Nathaniel. He has developmental delays and exhibits behaviour that are similar links to autism. Nathaniel, nearly four years old, is trapped on a wait-list to see a specialist, a wait that often exceeds two years.

Deputy Premier, if your commitment to autism is well-demonstrated, as you say, why is Nathaniel being forced to wait during this critical time in his development?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you for bringing forward this issue and this case. We agree that early intervention is critical to improving outcomes for eligibility for IB—absolutely. That's right.

We're determined to make further progress. That's why we've made investments in autism. We've made changes to the program. We removed the previous government's age six cut-off for eligibility. There has been a 114% increase in funding for autism, and this year we invested over \$185 million in autism services. I do meet with parents with children with autism, and I recognize that they face unique challenges, Speaker. We will continue to increase our investments. We will continue to work with our partners in the sector as well.

While we continue to increase our investments, though, we recognize that the prevalence of autism has gone up as well. One in 150 children used to be diagnosed. That has increased to one in 88.

We know that there is more to be done. We have a clinical expert committee looking at how our services are delivered with a view to delivering services in smarter ways to reduce wait-lists.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'm going to go back to the Deputy Premier. Without an official autism diagnosis, you're well aware that Nathaniel is ineligible for any govern-

ment funding that would have a life-changing impact on his development. Even after receiving a diagnosis, there is a significant wait-list for accessing treatment. Multi-year delays for diagnosis and access to appropriate treatment is unfairly harming the long-term well-being of young children, like Nathaniel, with autism.

What is this government going to do for children like Nathaniel whose entire life will be negatively impacted by these unacceptable wait times for diagnosis and treatment?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Again, with respect to autism, we've tripled the number of children receiving intensive behavioural intervention. We recognize that there are waiting lists, Speaker. That's why earlier this year we invested an additional \$5 million for autism intervention programs. This will help create additional spaces, relieve wait-list pressures and help more children and youth get the help they need earlier. We recognize that.

Our clinical expert committee is currently reviewing barriers to early intervention and access to diagnosis with a view to identifying opportunities for improvement. The committee is made up of top researchers, academics and clinical experts and will advise the government on the latest research with the view to enhancing services.

We remain committed to helping all our families and all our children achieve as much as they can.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. I understand that last year, Mr. Speaker, the city of Toronto took the first step in an e-service strategy with the implementation of a reloadable debit card as a method of payment to Ontario Works. It sounds like an interesting project, but I have some concerns.

I believe last year the opposition party talked about a debit card for social assistance recipients, and they would restrict how the recipients could spend their money. I believe that the opposition party thinks that it would somehow magically know whether you buy carrots or buy chips, or control how Ontarians can choose to make choices. Putting this aside, it sounds really impractical.

Minister, can you please tell the House, how is the debit card currently being used in the city of Toronto? Are there any restrictions on the social assistance recipients?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm going to thank the member for her question and provide assurance to all members of the House that there are absolutely no restrictions on what recipients can invest or spend their money on that they receive from the provincial government. As with other payment methods, recipients are free to do what they want with their own money.

The majority of social assistance recipients receive their money through direct bank deposits, but there are some recipients who, for one reason or another, don't have a bank account. That's why these reloadable cards are made available, and it's a very convenient way, and it has worked out very well in the city of Toronto.

We want to make sure that clients understand that it's helpful to have a relationship with a financial institution, but if they don't, we'll do everything and anything we can to ensure that they get the money they have coming to them, and they can invest it and spend it in the way they want.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you to the minister for that response regarding how Ontario recipients can choose their method of payment by reloading the debit card, but also have the same freedom as all Ontarians, the freedom to spend their own money as they see fit. I know in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt, the residents will be pleased to know that there are options regarding the reloading of debit cards that will enable them to help manage their money.

Overall, the reloading debit cards seem like a great idea, Minister. They also provide flexibility and more choices. They also allow families and individuals to decide how they want to spend their money and how they manage their money.

Speaker, through you to the minister, can he please inform the House if the reloadable debit cards are something that other municipalities are considering?

1130

Hon. Ted McMeekin: It is a great idea. It's a pilot project that's worked very well in the city of Toronto. We're prepared to look at it for other municipalities, should they want to do that, because we believe that's the right thing to do.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is to the Acting Premier. Last week the plant manager of Kimberly-Clark in Huntsville, Rene Landry, wrote me, concerned about high electricity prices.

He writes: "Our annual electricity cost is approximately \$4.5 million and current rates in Ontario are among the highest in North America. The most relevant measure of electricity pricing for K-C Huntsville is how we compare it with other K-C facilities—our competition for finite capital and job growth. Kimberly-Clark Huntsville mill has the highest per-unit electricity cost of any K-C tissue mill in North America. If electricity rates do not become more affordable, Ontario risks losing important investment from companies like Kimberly-Clark."

Translation: You're risking losing even more jobs because of your high energy prices. Acting Premier, what do you say to Kimberly-Clark?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order, please. Sit down, please.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: First of all, what I would say to the member is that I'm more than pleased to meet with the manager of Kimberly-Clark at his convenience to review his energy file. I can tell you that there are

significant numbers of industrial companies across Ontario who are accessing demand response and demand management to reduce their energy in a very significant way. I'm happy to review those opportunities with him. In addition—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, come to order.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —the letter makes reference to rates across North America. I said earlier this morning that industrial rates in northern Ontario are among the lowest in Canada and lower than 44 American states. Industrial rates in southern Ontario are lower than in Alberta, Michigan, New Jersey and California and in line with states like New York, Virginia and Tennessee. But the bottom line is that I'm more than happy to sit down and meet with him to review his energy file and to see what we can do to accommodate him.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: To the minister, I'll take you up on that offer, because we watch company after company pick up and move their operations to provinces and states that have energy prices that are cheaper.

Kimberly-Clark is a big employer in the town of Huntsville: 174 highly skilled Ontarians go to work there every day to produce Kleenex brand facial tissue. This letter from the plant manager is a warning, loud and clear.

He goes on: "Reliable and affordable energy is essential going forward to help ensure a more competitive business climate, which will help create jobs and bring economic growth to the province."

Minister, how do you expect our companies, factories and job creators to compete when they are forced to pay some of the most expensive hydro costs in North America?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: As I indicated, I'm very willing to meet with the manager you referred to. I have a quote here from the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters of Ontario: "The long-term energy plan review responds to a key priority for Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters" of Ontario "by providing greater clarity and certainty for manufacturers with respect to electricity rates going forward. CME also supports new initiatives to enable manufacturers to better manage their energy and the associated costs. Importantly, the long-term energy plan will reduce overall system costs, which ultimately translates into more competitive forward rates for businesses."

I'm happy to meet with him and see whether there's anything we can do more immediately.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Education. In January of this year, the hard-working men and women who ensure that our schools are safe and clean signed a memorandum of understanding with this government. This memorandum of understanding con-

tained important provisions regarding disability benefits for injured or sick workers, provisions that are being ignored by a number of school boards.

At a time when this government is making the centralization of education bargaining one of its top priorities, how does it explain to these hard-working men and women that a signed agreement with the Liberal government is not worth the paper it's written on?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to respond to the question. As you know, we worked very hard when we first took office under the leadership of Premier Wynne to work with a whole host of education sector workers in order to make sure that we had memorandums of understanding with all of them. In fact, over the course of that period, we were able to achieve agreements with all of the teachers' unions, the support workers, the education support workers represented by CUPE, by OSSTF, by ETFO and eventually with the education support workers who were represented by various other unions.

What's interesting about this is that in fact the details vary from memorandum of understanding to memorandum of understanding, so that the details with different unions do vary.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Minister, it may be true that details vary from memorandum of understanding to memorandum of understanding, but any successful collective bargaining relationship has to assume that once a deal is struck, all provisions in that agreement are honoured. The problem with the MOU that you signed or that your government signed with the province's education support workers is that a number of local boards are simply not honouring the disability provisions. This, in turn, is causing enormous difficulties for many sick and injured support workers, most of whom are making less than \$40,000 a year. At a time when this government is asking hundreds of thousands of teachers and support workers to put their faith in centralized bargaining, how does this government explain a signed promise that was never honoured?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I don't think you were actually listening to quite what I said, which is that there are different details depending on whether the education support workers are with OSSTF, ETFO or CUPE. In this particular case, the discussion is around one of the areas in which the details between the three MOUs vary and the understanding that various people have of the difference in the details between the three different templates that go with the three different unions.

SPECIAL REPORT, ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSIONER OF ONTARIO

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I beg to inform the House that I've laid upon the table the 2012 Annual Energy Conservation Progress Report, volume two, from the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1138 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm honoured to introduce, from Wallaceburg Community Living, today to Queen's Park David Katzman and Don Parent, who are sitting with my wife, Kate Bartz, and my daughter, Annie McNaughton. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'd like to introduce Maureen Roy and Tim O'Sullivan from Welland. They're here today to meet with us to hear the Huronia apology.

Hon. Michael Coteau: We have a number of people who are joining us this afternoon for the tribute to the late President Nelson Mandela. In the east gallery today we have Consul General Tselane Mokuena and Consul Reginold Ncamane, who are joining us today.

Also, we have individuals who have received the Order of Canada who have been tireless advocates for Mandela back in the 1980s and onwards.

We also have individuals from the Nelson Mandela Foundation Canada and from historical societies and human rights organizations, and we have some representatives from Nelson Mandela Park Public School, representing education.

Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to welcome here today Mr. Moola, who was a personal friend of Nelson Mandela who marched with him back in the 1950s.

I'd like to welcome all of our friends here to Queen's Park today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Welcome.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It gives me great pleasure to introduce a friend, Kory Earle, who is from Carleton Place. Kory is president of People First of Ontario and first vice-president of People First of Canada. He's here today to hear the Premier's apology over Huronia Regional Centre.

Mr. Michael Prue: I'd like to introduce two individuals, Gregory Lannon and Loretta Young, who were former Huronia residents and who are here today for the apology.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to announce that Debbie Vernon, Beverly Link and Betty Ann Bond are here, or about to arrive, for the official apology with regard to Huronia Regional Centre. I'd like to welcome them here to Queen's Park.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: It's my pleasure to introduce in our members' gallery today Ahmed-Shah Hotaki, who is the editor and owner of the Afghan Post. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member is seeking unanimous consent to move a motion. Agreed? Agreed.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: These are the names of the survivors—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Read the names.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Sorry?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Go ahead. You can read the names.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you. This includes the survivors, the names of deceased victims, families, friends, supporters, many present and some not able to attend:

Corey Lee; Sue Bristow; Teri Armitage; Marilyn Dolmage; Jim Dolmage; Patricia Seth; Marie Slark; Richard Paul Bailey; Gabriella M.; Dawn Roper; Victoria Freeman; Joyce Balaz; Bill Hiltz; Arn Row; Georgia Helleiner; Tim O'Sullivan; Maureen Roy; Brent Becigneul; Bill Witts; Linda McEachern; Camille Barr; Andrea Johnston; Linda Cowan; Doug Cowan; Vernon Stuart-Dolmage; Francine Stuart-Dolmage; Murphy Stuart-Dolmage; Heather Stuart; Jay Dolmage; Leah Dolmage; Carrie Anne Tompkins; Elizabeth Rose; Ann LeBlanc; Catherine Rowley; Sean Rowley; Barry Smith; Thelma Wheatley; Michael Dalziel; Cheryl Eadhy; Danielle Pittman; Bruce Kappel; Kory Earle; Nora Wilson; Rena Post; Kerry Thomas; Deb Richards; Dale Sheets; Richard Taylor; Diane McLean; Maureen Todd; Virginia Mills; Rola Hamdan; Lynda Kahn; Jack Pearpoint; Sue Hutton; Paul Cochrane; Caseen Johnson; Robbie Cowdrey; Lorraine Bradley; Bill Rolfe; Joanna MacLeod; Alex Reid; Toinette Parisio; Peter Ogrodnik; Madeline Burghardt; Larry Bailey; John Balatka; Brenda Parris; Kathy Oates; Tim Glass; Val Irving; Wendy Glass; John Arthur Clark; Randy Vanderburg; Rodney Vanderburg; Denise Embury; Timmie Ann Schramm; Helen Sanderson; Harold Johnston; Joseph Durand; Gian Mele; Meryle Houston; Lucy Houston-Jardim; Jennifer Henry; Susie Henderson; Isabella Henry; David McKillop; Eileen McKillop; Christine Clarke; Muriel Grace; Theresa Devine; Gillian Chernets; Betty Ann Bond; Beverly Link; Cindy Mitchell; Kim Robinson; Muriel Kabel; John Goodridge; Donna Braithway; Donna Goodreach; Diane Miles; Meyers Sadoway; Francis Sadoway; David Houston; Beverly Houston; Jesse Houston; Joanne Gallagher; Doris Power; Jordan Power; Peter; Alex Reed; Michael Callahan; Judith McGill; Debbie Vernon; Paul Nichol; Debbie Ann Bond; Cathy Stroud; Kate Rossiter; Jes Sachse; and Molly Croke.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HURONIA REGIONAL CENTRE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I move unanimous consent to be able to read out the names of the Huronia survivors who are going to be in the House for the apology.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It's not often that I agree with former Premier Dalton McGuinty, but back in 2002,

he said what a lot of people believe: "If a rural community loses a school, it's not the same as shutting one down in downtown Toronto where there's another one six blocks away. What you're doing is robbing the community of an important component. It's the heart and soul of a community. If you don't have a school it's really tough to attract and to hold on to young families."

Speaker, I couldn't have said it better myself. Many families in Newbury and neighbouring Southwest Middlesex are strongly opposed to the possibility of closing Mosa Central Public School, consolidating the Mosa Central students at Ekcoe Central Public School in Glencoe and constructing a \$4.7-million addition at Ekcoe Central.

I attended Ekcoe from kindergarten to grade 5 and later attended Mosa Central from grade 6 to 8. It was at Mosa that I developed my interest in the political process and served as a legislative page. I should also mention Glencoe District High School, which is also at risk of being closed, where I attended secondary school and served on the student council.

These three schools are cornerstones in our communities and vital pieces of our local economy. In rural communities, it's more than just enrolment numbers; it is about attracting and retaining young families.

Speaker, I stand proudly with the residents of Southwest Middlesex, Newbury and the parents and students at Ekcoe, Mosa and Glencoe District High School.

DEMENTIA

Ms. Cindy Forster: I met recently with Teena Kindt, CEO of the Alzheimer Society of Niagara Region, and she's trying very hard to make this government aware of the crisis looming with the number of people affected with dementia illnesses.

In the Welland riding alone, the number of people is expected to grow by 25% by the year 2020. There are 8,500 individuals and their families living with dementia in my area.

On a national scale, the numbers are even more frightening. According to a new study, the number of Canadians living with Alzheimer's and other dementia-related illnesses now stands at 750,000 and will double to 1.4 million by 2031.

The Alzheimer Society has highlighted three solutions that will narrow the gap between persons with dementia and the need. The first is some prioritized funding in next year's budget for those with dementia, the need to establish standardized wait times for long-term care and the need to provide more staff in long-term-care facilities to deal with the support of people with dementia. I'm proud to support the Alzheimer Society of Niagara Region and know how hard the staff worked in addressing this condition.

Dementia-related illnesses, of which Alzheimer's is the most prevalent, are health issues we can no longer ignore. I urge the government to listen to these concerns and suggested solutions, and to address this issue, as it is spiralling out of control.

1310

EVENTS IN UKRAINE

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Yesterday, in Kiev, Ukraine, hundreds of thousands of the city's residents packed Independence Square yet again, chanting "Ukraine is Europe," waving thousands of national flags, calling for the reversal of the government's decision to halt European integration and for the resignation of president Viktor Yanukovich. This was the largest in a series of pro-European demonstrations that began two weeks ago, expressing the will of Ukrainians in Kiev and across the country. The size of yesterday's protest and others have reached a scale not seen since the 2004 Orange Revolution.

This morning, there have been reports of riot police moving into central Kiev. On the first day of December, the day after the violent crackdown against the peaceful protesters; the Ukrainian Canadian community organized its own "Maidan" demonstrations in Toronto and across Canada. These were in support of the pro-European demonstrations in Ukraine. I spoke at this rally to lend my support to the Ukrainian constituents in Mississauga East-Cooksville during this turbulent political crisis.

Canada was the first western country to recognize Ukraine's independence. Canada and Ukrainian Canadians, including the over 300,000-strong community here in Ontario, have played a critical role in helping Ukraine's journey to democracy. I call on the Yanukovich government to respect fundamental human and democratic rights, such as the right to peacefully demonstrate. I also call on Canada to stand shoulder to shoulder with Ukrainians.

LAKESIDE FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

Mrs. Jane McKenna: This special time of year makes nights sparkle, but few festive displays in our province can hold a candle to Burlington's brightest seasonal tradition and longest-running festival, the Lakeside Festival of Lights. The festival celebrates its 18th anniversary this year, with over 60 fun and colourful displays lighting up the city's lakeshore throughout the holiday season.

I would invite all members of this Legislature and those watching at home to pay a visit to my riding and spend an evening in beautiful Spencer Smith Park with family and friends. Enjoy dinner at one of Burlington's many great downtown restaurants, walk out over Lake Ontario along the winding Brant Street Pier for a panoramic view of the displays, or take in the crisp night air open-air ice skating on Rotary Centennial Pond, a 10,000 square foot open-air ice rink slated to open for the season in the week before Christmas.

Of course, there is no magic without hard work behind the scenes, and so it is here, where dedicated volunteers give of time each year to care for the dozens of displays. Kudos to them, Speaker.

You can visit Burlington's Lakeside Festival of Lights between now and January 7, 2014.

ARTSCAPE YOUNGPLACE

Mr. Rosario Marchese: A few weeks ago, I was proud to participate in the opening night ceremony of Artscape Youngplace on Shaw Street in Trinity-Spadina. This is now the largest cultural institution serving the West Queen West neighbourhood, home to some of Toronto's most creative people. I would like to recognize another great success from Tim Jones and his team at Artscape. They have restored a school that has been unused since the year 2000 back to its rightful role as a community hub.

Artscape provides rental space to arts groups and artists at both market and below-market rates. With their community focus mandate, Artscape Youngplace has provided a new home for 13 artists, such as Ruth Adler and Eve Egoyan, as well as arts organizations such as the Luminato Festival, the Koffler Gallery, the Centre of the Arts and the Centre for Indigenous Theatre.

I would also like to acknowledge the generosity of lead donor the Michael Young Family Foundation.

Artscape Youngplace is helping to build a community with creativity and art at its centre. Thank you to this vital community organization.

THE AFGHAN POST

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I'd like to take this time to congratulate the Afghan Post on their 15th anniversary of being in business and keeping their readers informed and engaged. It is my privilege, also, to introduce Ahmad-Shah Hotaki, the editor and owner of the Afghan Post, who is here today in the member's gallery and whom I met with earlier.

As a newly elected member, I am pleased to represent the community of Scarborough-Guildwood, which is home to a large and vibrant Afghan population. I've been to many of the local stores along Markham and Lawrence and in other areas.

The Afghan Post plays an important role in reaching out to Ontarians of all faiths and cultures. This paper speaks to them and informs them and has given the Afghan community a voice here in Ontario. The Afghan Post and business owners like Ahmad-Shah Hotaki are part of what makes Scarborough-Guildwood a vibrant place and this province so diverse and dynamic. They drive the economy with the long hours they dedicate to their work and the jobs that they create within our communities.

Congratulations again to Ahmad-Shah Hotaki and the Afghan Post on 15 years of serving the diverse and vibrant people of Ontario. Here is a sample of the cover of October's issue.

LIMBA THE ELEPHANT

Mr. John O'Toole: I rise today to pay tribute to Limba, Canada's oldest elephant, who passed away peacefully December 3 after a short battle with cancer.

Limba had been a celebrity attraction at the Bowmanville Zoo for over 25 years. On Sunday evening, I was honoured to be asked and joined with hundreds of people—with Mayor Adrian Foster, federal MP Erin O'Toole, as well as Limba's friends within the community—to have a vigil in honour of Limba.

In her first 26 years, Limba was raised alone in a zoo outside Ontario, without an elephant family of her own. When she came to Bowmanville Zoo in 1989, Limba bonded closely with those at the zoo who cared for her, took her for walks, played in the water and stayed with her during thunderstorms when she was frightened.

Limba's trainer, Robert Crawford, has been her constant companion for many years. She bonded with neighbours like Anne Wilson, who made elephant sandwiches of bread and vegetables as a special treat. Limba was more comfortable with people, especially with children, than she was with other elephants.

Our community and families visiting Bowmanville Zoo and virtually all around the world developed close and fond ties and memories of Limba. There have been thousands of tweets and other social contacts around the world. Just three weeks ago, she was cheered by thousands of fans as she walked in the Bowmanville Santa Claus Parade. She was a gentle giant who prompted a spontaneous outpouring of affection and support from the world community. She will be sadly missed.

I extend my sympathies to zoo owner Michael Hackenberg; his wife, Dr. Wendy Korver; their sons, Kurt and Dirk; and to Limba's faithful friend and trainer, Robert Crawford, and all the staff at Bowmanville Zoo.

Thank you for the opportunity.

STEVEN MUIR

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It gives me great pleasure to rise in the House to recognize my longest-serving employee, Steven Muir. Steven has worked in my constituency office in Oakville for over 10 years and is a great asset to the office.

Throughout his life, Steven has faced a great many challenges in his mission to advocate for those with intellectual disabilities. Steven brings much-needed attention to those with intellectual disabilities by spreading a positive message of acceptance and inclusion.

Nothing has ever stopped Steven from developing important life skills; nothing has ever stopped him from becoming a strong advocate. It's his mission to encourage everyone he meets to become more tolerant, more caring and more understanding people, especially to those who have differences. Steven leads by example and strives every day to be a better person himself. I've learned a great deal from my friendship with him, and I really admire his compassion and his inclusive nature.

The community of Oakville recently awarded Steven with the All Star Award to recognize his efforts and his work for our community. Community Living Oakville partnered with organizer James Montague, in hopes of having more people living with a developmental disability celebrate their success.

He's a wonderful MPP constituency office assistant. He participates in all extracurricular events, including summer festivals and government announcements. He was here last week and joined us for question period and lunch. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Steven for all the great work he does.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Victor Fedeli: His Worship Leo Jobin, the mayor of Chisholm township, and a number of very concerned property owners came to my Nipissing riding office last Friday literally beside themselves over their most recent assessments from the Municipal Property Assessment Corp.

After hearing their concerns, there are certainly legitimate questions that MPAC needs to answer. The residents believe that MPAC is using "unfair and poor property comparisons and valuations, resulting in high property assessments." Of course, these assessments are used to determine municipal taxes, and some residents have seen unseemly increases.

1320

To be quite blunt, Speaker, when I looked at their current assessment and tax bill, I could not believe these homes in Chisholm were paying that kind of tax. There is a sense that MPAC has specifically and unfairly targeted residents who recently built or renovated existing properties, and that they are bearing an unfair assessment burden.

I would urge MPAC to sit down with Mayor Leo Jobin and the residents of Chisholm to discuss this situation and have a second look at how they've calculated their assessments in this particular township.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LIQUOR LICENSING STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT DES LOIS CONCERNANT LES PERMIS D'ALCOOL

Mr. Marchese moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 150, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to liquor licensing / Projet de loi 150, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne les permis d'alcool.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for a short statement?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'll read it as shown, as it is written.

The City of Toronto Act, 2006, is amended by adding a new section 92.1, which allows the city of Toronto to pass bylaws limiting the number of licences granted to

liquor licensed establishments or classes thereof. Section 97 of the act is amended to allow the city to pass bylaws requiring liquor licensed establishments or classes thereof to be closed to the public at any time.

Section 5.1 of the Licence Appeal Tribunal Act, 1999, is amended by adding a new subsection (4.1), which states that, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, in a hearing that the tribunal holds under the Liquor Licence Act, the tribunal must consider a resolution of the council of the municipality as proof of the needs and wishes of the residents of the municipality.

Section 6 of the Liquor Licence Act is amended by adding a new subsection (3.1), and section 8.1 is amended by adding a new subsection (1.1). The new subsections require that, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, the registrar and the board must consider a resolution of the council of the municipality as proof of the needs and wishes of the residents of the municipality. Section 17 of the act is amended by adding a new subsection (1.1), which requires the registrar to give notice of an application for the transfer of a licence to sell liquor to the municipality in which the premises are located.

Section 148 of the Municipal Act, 2001, is amended to allow a municipality to pass bylaws requiring liquor licensed establishments or classes thereof to be closed to the public at any time. The act is amended by adding a new section 154.1, which allows a municipality to pass bylaws limiting the number of licences granted to liquor licensed establishments or classes thereof.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

Interjections.

Hon. John Milloy: Please say no. Please.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The government House leader is asking for unanimous consent to move a motion. Agreed? Agreed.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item number 74 be waived.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Milloy has moved that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item number 74 be waived.

Agreed? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. John Milloy: I move that, pursuant to standing order 6(c)(ii), the House shall meet from 6:45 to midnight tonight, Monday, December 9, 2013.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Milloy has moved that, pursuant to standing order 6(c)(ii), the House shall meet from 6:45 to midnight on Monday, December 9, 2013. Agreed? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1326 to 1331.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Milloy has moved government motion number 33. All those in favour, please stand and be recognized by the Clerk one at a time.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Bartolucci, Rick
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bradley, James J.
Chan, Michael
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic

Dickson, Joe
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hunter, Mitzie
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kwinter, Monte
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Matthews, Deborah
McMeekin, Ted

McNeely, Phil
Milloy, John
Mori, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Piruzza, Teresa
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Sousa, Charles
Wong, Soo
Zimmer, David

All those opposed, please stand and be recognized by the Clerk one at a time.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.
Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Bisson, Gilles
Chudleigh, Ted
DiNovo, Cheri
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Fife, Catherine
Forster, Cindy
Gélinas, France
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hatfield, Percy

Jackson, Rod
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack
Marchese, Rosario
McDonell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Miller, Paul
Milligan, Rob E.
Munro, Julia
Natyshak, Taras
O'Toole, John

Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pettapiece, Randy
Prue, Michael
Schein, Jonah
Smith, Todd
Tabuns, Peter
Taylor, Monique
Thompson, Lisa M.
Vanthof, John
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 35; the nays are 43.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. John Milloy: I move that, pursuant to standing order 6(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. tonight, Monday, December 9, 2013.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Milloy moves that, pursuant to standing order 6(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 to 9:30 p.m. on Monday, December 9, 2013. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I heard a whole lot of noes.

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1335 to 1340.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Milloy has moved government notice of motion number 32. All those in favour, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Bartolucci, Rick
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bradley, James J.
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic

Dickson, Joe
Duguid, Brad
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hunter, Mitzie
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kwinter, Monte
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Matthews, Deborah
McMeekin, Ted

McNeely, Phil
Milloy, John
Mori, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Piruzza, Teresa
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Sousa, Charles
Wong, Soo
Zimmer, David

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.
Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Bisson, Gilles
Chudleigh, Ted
DiNovo, Cheri
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Fife, Catherine
Forster, Cindy
Gélinas, France
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hatfield, Percy

Jackson, Rod
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
Marchese, Rosario
McDonell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Miller, Paul
Milligan, Rob E.
Munro, Julia
Natyshak, Taras

O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pettapiece, Randy
Prue, Michael
Schein, Jonah
Smith, Todd
Tabuns, Peter
Taylor, Monique
Thompson, Lisa M.
Vanthof, John
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 37; the nays are 44.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

PETITIONS

CHARITABLE GAMING

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, as I get my petition out here. It reads as follows: "Whereas the government of Ontario, through the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, levies the Ontario provincial fee on the sale of break-open tickets by charitable and non-profit organizations...; and

"Whereas local hospital auxiliaries/associations across the province, who are members of the Hospital Auxiliaries Association of Ontario, use break-open tickets to raise funds to support local health care equipment needs in more than 100 communities across the province" of Ontario; "and

"Whereas in September 2010, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario announced a series of changes to the Ontario provincial fee which included a reduction of the fee for certain organizations and the complete elimination of the fee for other organizations, depending on where the break-open tickets are sold"—how unfair; "and

"Whereas the September 2010 changes to the Ontario provincial fee unfairly treat certain charitable and non-profit organizations (local hospital auxiliaries) by not providing for the complete elimination of the fee which would otherwise be used by these organizations to increase their support for local health care equipment needs and other community needs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to eliminate the Ontario provincial fee on break-open tickets for all charitable and non-profit organizations in Ontario and allow all organizations using this fundraising tool to invest more funds in local community projects, including local health care equipment needs, for the benefit of Ontarians."

I'm pleased to sign this on behalf of all the hard-working hospital auxiliaries in the province of Ontario and present it to Morgan, one of the great pages here in her last week.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I have a little bit of quiet in the House? There are about 25 conversations going on. It's very difficult to hear the members.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over Ontario.

"Whereas there are a growing number of reported cases of abuse, neglect and substandard care for our seniors in long-term-care homes; and

"Whereas people with complaints have limited options, and frequently they don't complain because they fear repercussions, which suggests too many seniors are being left in vulnerable situations without independent oversight; and

"Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada—including the three territories—where our Ombudsman does not have independent oversight of long-term-care homes;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to expand the Ombudsman's mandate to include Ontario's long-term-care homes in order to protect our most vulnerable seniors."

I fully agree with this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Payton to bring it to the Clerk.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I have a petition here from my community of Scarborough–Guildwood.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas access to affordable housing is an important priority;

"Whereas the government of Ontario has committed nearly \$3 billion to the creation of new affordable housing since 2003 and has supported municipalities in regard to existing units;

"Whereas there is an important role for all three levels of government when it comes to affordable housing;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls on the federal government to support the government of Ontario and Ontario municipalities in upgrading existing affordable housing and creation of new affordable housing in Ontario."

Mr. Speaker, I will sign this petition and give it to page Michaela.

TIRE DISPOSAL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here that has been circulating in the province for some time. It is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario government has approved massive increases to Ontario Tire Stewardship's eco fees for agricultural tires, increasing some fees from \$15.29 to \$352.80, \$546.84 or \$1,311.24;

"Whereas Ontario imposes tire eco fees that are dramatically higher than those in other provinces;

"Whereas other provincial governments either exempt agricultural tires from recycling programs or charge fees only up to \$75;

"Whereas these new fees will result in increased costs for our farmers and lost sales for our farm equipment dealerships;

"Whereas the PC caucus has proposed a new plan that holds manufacturers and importers of tires responsible for recycling, but gives them the freedom to work with other businesses to find the best way possible to carry out that responsibility;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Please suspend the decision to significantly increase Ontario Tire Stewardship's fees on agricultural and off-the-road tires pending a thorough impact study and implementation of proposals to lower costs."

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to present this petition.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

Mr. John Vanthof: I have a petition here from all across the province.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a motion was introduced at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads, 'That, in the opinion of the House, the operation of off-road vehicles on highways under regulation 316/03 be changed to include side-by-side off-road vehicles, four-seat side-by-side vehicles, and two-up vehicles in order for them to be driven on highways under the same conditions as other off-road/all-terrain vehicles';

"Whereas this motion was passed on November 7, 2013, to amend the Highway Traffic Act 316/03;

"Whereas the economic benefits will have positive impacts on ATV clubs, ATV manufacturers, dealers and rental shops, and will boost revenues to communities promoting this outdoor activity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the Ministry of Transportation to implement this regulation immediately."

I wholeheartedly agree, and sign it and give it to page Matteya.

1350

WASTE REDUCTION

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

"Whereas protecting the environment should be everyone's responsibility, including manufacturing and material producing companies; and

"Whereas it is important to require producers to be financially and environmentally responsible for recycling the goods and packaging they sell in Ontario, and to divert these wastes from landfill to recycling to drive innovation, generate new jobs, and new Ontario-made products; and

"Whereas new approaches are needed that reflect ideas and recommendations from the recycling sector that are designed to improve current recycling systems, to increase recycling and diversion rates, and better protect our environment;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act, 2013, introduced on June 6, 2013, by the Ontario Minister of Environment."

I fully support this petition, and I give the petition to page Payton.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean Program was implemented as a revenue-neutral, temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

"Whereas emissions and vehicle failure rates have dropped dramatically between 1999 and 2010, the Drive Clean program has clearly outlived its usefulness; and

"Whereas Ontario's new Drive Clean tests are recording higher-than-normal failure rates, even in cases where there is nothing wrong with a vehicle's emissions system; and

"Whereas this causes added inconvenience and higher costs for Ontario drivers; and

"Whereas in the case of pre-1998 vehicles, it is becoming increasingly difficult for owners to find an establishment that will provide the 'tailpipe' test for vehicles without the required on-board computer; and

"Whereas the Drive Clean program has generated a profit to the government of \$19 million over the past two years, despite a Supreme Court ruling that revenue-neutral government programs cannot generate a profit, the government is refusing to return this surplus to Ontario taxpayers;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Ontario government to take immediate action to end the Drive Clean program and return accumulated profits to Ontario taxpayers."

I affix my name in full support.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Ombudsman, who is an officer of the Legislature, is not allowed to provide trusted, independent investigations of complaints in the areas of hospitals, long-term-care homes, school boards, children's aid societies and retirement homes; and

"Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada not allowing their Ombudsman to investigate any of these areas; and

"Whereas people wronged by these institutions are left feeling helpless and most have nowhere else to turn for help to correct systemic issues;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Grant the Ombudsman the power to investigate hospitals, long-term-care homes, school boards, children's aid societies and retirement homes."

I couldn't agree with this more, Mr. Speaker. I will affix my name to it and give it to page Michaela to take to the table.

WASTE REDUCTION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly which reads as follows:

"Whereas protecting the environment should be everyone's responsibility, including manufacturing and material producing companies; and

"Whereas it is important to require producers to be financially and environmentally responsible for recycling the goods and packaging they sell in Ontario, and to divert these wastes from landfill to recycling to drive innovation, generate new jobs, and new Ontario-made products; and

"Whereas new approaches are needed that reflect ideas and recommendations from the recycling sector that are designed to improve current recycling systems, to increase recycling and diversion rates, and better protect our environment;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act, 2013, introduced on June 6, 2013, by the Ontario Minister of Environment."

Speaker, I'm pleased to sign and agree with this petition, and to ask page Julia to carry it for me.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas Kimm Fletcher, a mother of two diagnosed with brain cancer, has been prescribed with the drug Avastin to help prolong her life;

"Whereas the Ontario health ministry's Committee to Evaluate Drugs (CED) has indicated that the use of this drug is associated with higher, progression-free survival rates;

"Whereas this drug is not covered under OHIP—but is in other provincial jurisdictions;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario Parliament call on the Premier and her health minister to extend OHIP funding of the drug Avastin, so that Kimm Fletcher, and others like her, can have as much time to enjoy with her family as possible; and to tell the Wynne administration that 'Our health care system includes Kimm Fletcher.'"

I'm pleased to sign this petition and pass it to my page, Ana. Thank you very much.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Bill Walker: "Petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas Kimm Fletcher, a mother of two diagnosed with brain cancer, has been prescribed with the drug Avastin to help prolong her life;

"Whereas the Ontario health ministry's Committee to Evaluate Drugs (CED) has indicated that the use of this drug is associated with higher, progression-free survival rates;

"Whereas this drug is not covered under OHIP—but is in other provincial jurisdictions;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario Parliament call on the Premier and her health minister to extend OHIP funding of the drug Avastin, so that Kimm Fletcher, and others like her, can have as much time to enjoy with her family as possible; and to tell the Wynne administration that 'Our health care system includes Kimm Fletcher.'"

I support this, will sign my name and send it with page Cynthia. Thank you.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there are over 8,000 children and youth living under the care of the crown and of children's aid societies in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario Legislature hosted the 'Our Voice, Our Turn: Youth Leaving Care Hearings' in the fall of 2011; and

"Whereas these hearings made it clear that more must be done to support these young people and to raise awareness; and

"Whereas by proclaiming May 14 of each year as 'Children and Youth in Care Day,' the province would raise awareness and recognize the unique challenges faced by children and youth living in care; and

"Whereas Ontario's children's aid societies, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, and members of the community, including children and youth living in care, want to officially celebrate 'Children and Youth in Care Day' on May 14, 2014; and

"Whereas Bill 53, known as the 'Children and Youth in Care Day Act,' proposed by MPP Soo Wong, passed with unanimous support on May 9, 2013, but has since been delayed from being called for third reading;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario call Bill 53 for third reading immediately; and

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact Bill 53, the Children and Youth in Care Day Act, before May 2014."

I fully support the petition. I will give that petition to page Arvind. Thank you.

DIABETES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Liberal government implemented cuts to the Ontario health insurance program such that Ontario residents suffering from diabetes saw their annual eligibility for blood sugar test strips reduced to 200 per year, less than one a day; and

"Whereas a blood sugar test strip costs approximately 70 cents; and

"Whereas this latest cut to services to Ontario patients is just another misguided measure to nickel-and-dime Ontarians; and

"Whereas a focus on preventing disease and hospitalization is in the long-term interest of patients, their families and the province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately reinstate full and unlimited eligibility for blood sugar test strips covered by OHIP for all Ontario residents suffering from diabetes."

I agree with this petition and will be passing it on to page Jonathan. Thank you.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. John O'Toole: The petition here reads as follows:

"Whereas Hydro One ... Inc. (Hydro One) is proposing construction of a new transformer station on a 100-acre site in Clarington, near the Oshawa-Clarington boundary;

"Whereas the site is on the Oak Ridges moraine/greenbelt;

"Whereas concerns have been raised about the environmental impacts of this development, including harm to wildlife as well as contamination of ponds, streams and the underground water supply;

"Whereas sites zoned for industrial and/or commercial use are the best locations for large electricity transformer stations" on ground so zoned;

"Whereas most, if not all, residents do not agree this project is needed and that, if proven to be necessary, it could be best accommodated at" an alternative site "such as Cherrywood" or other locations;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the" Legislative Assembly "support the preservation of the Oak Ridges moraine, the greenbelt and the natural environment at this site. We also ask that the Ontario Legislature require the Clarington transformer station to be built at an alternative location zoned for an industrial facility and selected in accordance with the best planning principles."

I'm pleased to sign and support this on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham and present it to page Najat.

VISITOR

Hon. John Gerretsen: On a point of order, I wonder if you could welcome my spouse and partner in life, Assunta Gerretsen, who is with us today in the members' gallery to witness the proceedings here today.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, with the House's indulgence, I would just like to explain. I think that we have visitors here today and members of the House who are here anticipating a statement from all parties concerning Huronia and also a later one concerning the passing of former President Mandela. All three party leaders are on their way back from a funeral, the tragic death of a police officer, and they've been a bit delayed.

So, Mr. Speaker, with consultation with the other parties, I think you will find unanimous consent that at this point we recess to the call of the Chair, and that when the House resumes, up to five minutes be allotted to each party to speak with respect to the Huronia

Regional Centre apology. Following that, the House shall recess for five minutes, and then up to five minutes shall be allotted to each party to pay tribute to former President Nelson Mandela. Following this item of business, the House shall proceed with orders of the day.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The government House leader has—we have consent, you said?

Hon. John Milloy: I think you'll find consent.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Is there consent to recess the House at the call of the Chair? Agreed? Agreed.

This House stand recessed until the call of the Chair. There will be a five-minute bell to call the members back to the House following the recess.

The House recessed from 1402 to 1440.

HURONIA REGIONAL CENTRE

CENTRE RÉGIONAL DE LA HURONIE

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Good afternoon, everyone. It is not lost on me that this afternoon we are doing two very connected things. We are—I am—here to speak truth about a painful chapter in our history and to seek reconciliation with all of those who have been harmed. We will then pay tribute to a man who embodied the power of truth and reconciliation, so I draw on that strength as I offer this apology.

A government's responsibility is to care for its people and to make sure they are protected and safe, and therein lies a basic trust between the state and the people. It is on that foundation of trust that everything else is built: our sense of self, our sense of community, our sense of purpose. When that trust is broken with any one of us, we all lose something; we are all diminished.

I want to address a matter of trust before this House and my assembled colleagues, but I am truly speaking to a group of people who have joined us this afternoon and to the many others who could not be here today. I am humbled to welcome to the Legislature today former residents of the Huronia Regional Centre; and the Rideau Regional Centre, in Smiths Falls; and also to address former residents of the Southwestern Regional Centre, near Chatham, along with their families and supporters. I want to welcome all of you, I want to honour your determination and your courage, and I want to thank you for being here to bear witness to this occasion.

Today we take responsibility for the suffering of these people and their families.

Aujourd'hui, nous assumons la responsabilité des souffrances subies par ces personnes et les membres de leur famille.

I offer an apology to the men, women and children of Ontario who were failed by a model of institutional care for people with developmental disabilities. We must look in the eyes of those who have been affected and those they leave behind and say we are sorry.

As Premier and on behalf of all the people of Ontario, I am sorry for your pain, for your losses and for the

impact these experiences must have had on your faith in this province and in your government. I am sorry for what you and your loved ones experienced and for the pain that you carry to this day.

À titre de première ministre et au nom de l'ensemble de la population de l'Ontario, je suis désolée des peines, des pertes et de toutes les répercussions que vous avez subies et qui ont miné votre confiance dans la province et dans le gouvernement. Je suis désolée de ce que vous et vos êtres chers avez dû vivre, de même que pour la peine que vous avez endurée jusqu'à ce jour.

In the case of Huronia, some residents suffered neglect and abuse within the very system that was meant to provide them care

We broke faith with them and with you, and by doing so, we diminished ourselves. Over a period of generations and under various governments, too many of these men, women and children and their families were deeply harmed, and they continue to bear the scars and the consequences of this time. Their humanity was undermined. They were separated from their families and robbed of their potential, their comfort, their safety and their dignity. At Huronia, some of these residents were forcibly restrained, left in unbearable seclusion, exploited for their labour and crowded into unsanitary conditions. While the model of care carried out by this institution is now acknowledged to have been deeply flawed, there were also cases of unchecked physical and emotional abuse by some staff and residents.

Huronia was closed in 2009, when Ontario closed the doors to its last remaining provincial institutions for people with developmental disabilities. Today, Mr. Speaker, we no longer see people with developmental disabilities as something other; they are boys and girls, men and women with hopes and dreams, like everyone else. In Ontario, all individuals deserve our support, our respect and our care. We must look out for one another, take care of one another and challenge ourselves to be led by our sense of moral purpose before all else.

Today, we strive to support people with developmental disabilities so they can live as independently as possible and be more fully included in all aspects of their community. As a society, we seek to learn from the mistakes of the past, and that process continues.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that we have more to do, so we will protect the memory of all those who have suffered, help to tell their stories, and ensure that the lessons of this time are not lost.

We are so sorry.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm going to split my time with my colleague the member from Simcoe North, who has spoken about Huronia on many occasions here in the Ontario Legislature.

I'm a proud Ontarian. I love my province dearly. There's no place I'd rather be or be from. But we have a very sad chapter in our history that demands an apology. When we do wrong, we need to speak to it plainly and honestly.

Compassion has always been part of what defines Ontario. It's part of our character. The duty to support

our most vulnerable is our government's most important responsibility—to protect those who cannot protect themselves. When we fail that, we fail all Ontarians, and there is never an excuse.

As a province and as a government, we failed the children of the Huronia Regional Centre. These developmentally disabled boys and girls, men and women looked to us, as caretakers and as leaders, to be there for them, their protectors; instead, horrific stories of systemic neglect, physical, emotional and sexual abuse. To abuse that trust and then to abuse the innocent lives is atrocious and inexcusable. It's flesh and blood, brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews, sons and daughters. For too long, these boys, girls, men and women were out of sight, out of mind, the burden of that experience entirely on their shoulders and that incredible weight on the backs of their parents and families.

It's truly unfortunate it took so long to get to this day, but we all owe an incredible debt of gratitude to those who fought to get us here, many of those in the gallery here today on this historic day.

1450

I want to offer my thanks to Marilyn and Jim Dolmage, Patricia Seth and Marie Slark for their inspiring bravery and incredible tenacity. You gave a face to the cause, a voice to those who could not speak up for themselves, and a peace to those who cannot join us here today.

We stand here today collectively and apologize to the families, the boys and girls, the men and women. We are truly, truly sorry. Our apologies will never erase the pain or the tragedy. There's nothing, sadly, that we can do to take away the memories, to bring people back. But we must remember, and let us never forget this day, so that we never see it repeated again in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: As the MPP for the area where the Huronia Regional Centre was located, I'm pleased to be here today. I want to thank the Premier for the apology and I want to thank the kind words of our leader, Tim Hudak.

I know that with the closure of the Huronia Regional Centre, a lot of pressure was put on the Community Living organizations across our province, and when we're dealing with people with exceptionalities, I want to thank Community Living Huronia and Simcoe services in particular, the two major community living organizations in Simcoe county.

But I can tell you, the Premier did say—she said it right up front—we still have a lot to do. There are two things I hope that we can all, as MPPs, and I hope we can all, as community leaders, work on. One of them, of course, is some of the cases with how the police handle people with exceptionalities in extreme cases. I think there has already been some retraining done in that area, because we've had some pretty sad stories in that particular area.

The other one that I really hope we can zero in on is the people, the men and women who have raised their children; they were people born with exceptionalities,

and they've raised them to adult ages, and now the people are at—they're old people. Some of them have very feeble health. They're having a very, very difficult time finding the services in our province to handle them. I hear it continually in my area, and I hope that that's something that we can say to any government, whether it's past or present or future, I should say, that we have to deal with that as well, because there is definitely an area of concern that we have to take care for people, as our leader has said.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and again, thank you, Premier, for bringing this. It's a sign of leadership, both from my leader as well, to bring this apology today.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The victims, the women and men, girls and boys, who suffered abuse at the Huronia Regional Centre have waited a long time to hear two words from the Premier of Ontario: "I'm sorry." And it's important to understand why this apology could only be morally legitimate if it came from the first minister and not a member of cabinet. The survivors are citizens of Ontario, not wards of the province, not clients of the Ministry of Community and Social Services, and not simply claimants in a legal action against the Attorney General. They are citizens.

The courts have ruled that these citizens were neglected by our province when it had a duty of care, and the settlement mandated an apology. But it was always up to the Premier to dignify that apology. It's up to the current Premier to speak on behalf of all previous Premiers and to speak through the highest office of our province's democratic institution. This apology is an admission of wrongdoing, but it should also be a pledge that our province will never allow such neglect, such abuse, such a betrayal of our most vulnerable citizens, to ever happen again.

Ces excuses ne peuvent pas effacer le passé. Mais elles peuvent permettre aux survivants du Centre régional de la Huronie et à leur famille de retrouver un peu de paix afin de pouvoir aller de l'avant.

Sadly, many of the victims did not live to see this day, and many who wanted to be here in person could not attend because this event was scheduled at somewhat short notice, even after decades of delay. Hundreds are watching from home across this province, and some survivors and their families, friends and supporters travelled across winter roads to get to the Legislature this afternoon.

I hope they can take some solace in this apology, and I hope that the Premier will back up her words with actions. She must immediately clear away the roadblocks preventing survivors and their families from accessing their files. Sixty-five thousand pages of documents are owed to the survivors of the Huronia Regional Centre. Survivors should not have to file freedom of information requests to access their files. They should not incur any undue financial costs after all they have been through.

It's not enough for the government to say that the files are lost or that the files are inaccessible. The Huronia Regional Centre survivors and families have waited long

enough. The government must not diminish an apology with excuses. It must do whatever it takes to get the survivors the information they deserve. We cannot close this dark chapter in Ontario's history until all of the survivors and all of their families are contacted, compensated and fully informed.

So let's leave this historic moment of apology, which the Premier did very well in delivering, with open hearts. In fact, let's make it open our hearts. Let's learn from the past—absolutely—and let's make sure that forevermore the province of Ontario looks after all of its citizens.

Applause.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Pursuant to the earlier agreement, this House is recessed for five minutes.

The House recessed from 1457 to 1503.

NELSON MANDELA

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, there are some people whose contributions to humanity transcend borders, so when they die, the loss touches us all.

I'm honoured today to join with all parties of the Legislature and everyone in the Legislature today to pay tribute to Nelson Mandela.

Interruption.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. Security? Order.

This House stands recessed for five minutes.

The House recessed from 1504 to 1506.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is a day of high emotion, may I just say. It is high emotion for everyone.

There are some people whose contributions to humanity transcend borders, and so, when they die, the loss touches us all. I'm honoured today to join with all parties of the Legislature to pay tribute to Nelson Mandela.

Aujourd'hui, j'ai l'honneur de me joindre à tous les partis de l'Assemblée législative pour rendre hommage à Nelson Mandela.

There are few individuals who have done more to inspire the world, and like everyone in this room, I was deeply saddened to learn of his death last week. As a student of history and a huge believer in the power of the human spirit, I know his life will continue to serve as a beacon for change throughout South Africa, here in Ontario, and around the world.

I want to welcome everyone who has come here, particularly the consul general of South Africa, to join us today. Thank you very much.

As I thought about my statement today, I realized it's difficult to find new ways to talk about this man or the things that he meant to us individually. But I find myself returning again and again to the fact that he spent 27 years locked away in prison. This punishment, as unjust

and inhumane as it was, did not break him. It is a testament to his spirit, and to the human spirit, that he did not allow himself to be taken over by anger. And so he was able to make that long walk to freedom with his heart empty of hate and his mind free of bitterness or resentment. As he said afterward, he understood that you cannot drink poison and expect it to kill your enemies.

After these trials, this imprisonment, he went on to do more good than any one man or woman could dare to imagine: the first democratically elected president in South Africa; the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize; and a face, a voice, a force and a story that made people believe that the world could be good.

We, as Canadians, are privileged to have welcomed Nelson Mandela as an honorary citizen, and we're proud that he visited our beautiful province three times during his life. He famously said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." So it is no surprise that his visits here often focused on our schools and the students and teachers that he met there.

In June 1990, on his first visit to Canada, he addressed a large number of students from across the GTA at Central Tech. In 1998, more than 45,000 students and their teachers filled what was then known as the Sky-Dome to hear him tell the story of his life and describe the South African struggle for freedom and justice.

During his last visit to Canada, on November 17, 2001, he was present for the official naming of Nelson Mandela Park Public School, which was rechristened in his honour.

Last Thursday, parents and teachers from this school were already scheduled to attend the North American premiere of a film about Mandela's life. When he died that same evening and the news of his death spread, the event turned into a very special tribute. Many of the students who were there that night described Nelson Mandela as a man who never gave up. It was his resilience, his determination and his commitment to justice that inspired them. That is what the world expects from its leaders.

I was struck by a comment made by the principal of Nelson Mandela Park Public School, Mr. Jason Kandankery, who I believe is here—the principal of the school is here.

Principal Kandankery said, "In these times of political upheaval and political leaders who unfortunately far too often lack integrity we bear the name of the man who was all about integrity," and that is the school.

I stand here today because Nelson Mandela's legacy of fairness should serve as a challenge to us all. Ontario is truly a beacon of acceptance, tolerance, opportunity and equality in the world, and we will work together to ensure it remains worthy of a school that bears his name.

L'Ontario est véritablement un lieu d'acceptation, de tolérance, de possibilités et d'équité dans le monde entier. Nous allons travailler ensemble pour veiller à ce que notre province demeure digne d'avoir une école qui porte le nom de Nelson Mandela.

In 2001, he told students here in Toronto that they were the future leaders and that violence and hatred had no place in a free and democratic society. At that time, the school began a tradition that exists to this day. Each school day begins with the reading of a quote by Mr. Mandela that reflects his philosophy and reminds the students what they can hope to accomplish.

So I would like to conclude by bringing this tradition to our chamber today, and I quote: "It always seems impossible until it's done."

The world is a better place for his presence, and on behalf of the people of Ontario, we mourn his loss.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The roles we play in the provincial Legislature are critical to the well-being of our province and the citizens of Ontario, and we take pride in our work on behalf of all those we serve. In reality, the shadow that we cast on the international stage is incredibly small. Not so for one man; not so for Nelson Mandela.

While the entire world knew the day would come, it was nevertheless sad to hear of his passing in Johannesburg, South Africa. As dignitaries from around the world make their way to his funeral, including Canadian Prime Ministers Harper, Chrétien, Campbell, Clark and of course, Brian Mulroney, a moment here to say farewell and thanks to Nelson Mandela is welcomed by me and all colleagues of all parties, and I'll speak today on behalf of the PC caucus.

We are humbled to be but a few of the billions worldwide who also remember with pride the role that Canada played in Mr. Mandela's struggle. It made me proud, as a Canadian, when Canada, under Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, stood almost alone in supporting the anti-apartheid movement, supporting Nelson Mandela and bringing sanctions upon South Africa to push for his release. It was almost Canada alone, while other great nations hesitated. It always made me damned proud as a Canadian while others faltered—

Applause.

Mr. Tim Hudak: From the days when he was first noticed as a leading human rights advocate in the often-violent anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa, to those 27 years as the world's best-known political prisoner, to his Nobel Peace Prize in 1993, and finally to his incredible 1994 election as South Africa's first democratically elected president, Nelson Mandela built a legacy that will be forever a major chapter in our world's history. As Canadians, we should also be proud that Nelson Mandela, back in 2001, became the second of only five outstanding world figures to be named honorary citizens of our nation of Canada, which made him, therefore, part of us: a Canadian as well. I'm proud of that too.

On a personal level, I remember being an undergraduate student in the University of Western Ontario back in the 1980s, starting to take notice of the broader world around me, and how Mr. Mandela was one of those incredible, towering, inspirational world figures, already iconic in the struggle to end racism and bring democracy to South Africa—an incredibly inspiring champion of freedom, equality and justice.

And to think, after 27 years in prison, to forgive those who unjustly imprisoned you in the first place—what an incredible man.

As Mr. Mandela himself once put it, “Everyone can rise above their circumstances and achieve success if they are dedicated to and passionate about what they do.” Nelson Mandela had that dedication, and then some. He had that passion.

Today, our small world here thanks him from the bottom of our hearts for all of that, and so much more.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: We mourn Nelson Mandela’s death even as we celebrate his life. We revere his courage in the struggle against apartheid. We respect his leadership to the people of South Africa. We hail him as a hero to oppressed peoples around the globe. We welcomed him as a friend and honorary citizen of Canada, and we remember his visit to this Legislature with awe and admiration.

But it’s only with his passing that we can start to grasp just how deeply Mandela touched the world. He spent 27 years of his life unjustly and wrongly imprisoned. It’s hard to imagine, for any one of us, having to endure something like that. It’s hard to imagine you wouldn’t simply give in to bitterness and to anger or simply give up in despair. But after being locked away for 27 years of his life, Mandela left prison on Robben Island, and he didn’t call for vengeance against his captors. He didn’t give in to the brutality of a system that took 27 years of his life. Instead, as an amazed world looked on, he renewed his call for equality, for fairness and for change.

For Mandela, politics was a powerful instrument. He relied on justice and reason, rather than bloodshed and strife, to bring freedom to his people. He proved what he had always said: “It will always seem impossible until it’s done.”

It’s no wonder why he captured the hearts of people of all ages, but especially those of children. As I watched the news this week, I saw pictures of children in Johannesburg laying flowers in Nelson Mandela Square. I saw pictures, as the Premier was talking about, of kids in east Toronto lighting candles on the steps of the school that bears his name. I saw pictures of kids in countries around the world paying tribute, as we pay tribute to Nelson Mandela in this Legislature today.

Pour Nelson Mandela, la démocratie n’était pas seulement un idéal mais un mode de vie.

We who are elected representatives of the people who sent us here should feel humbled and grateful for this honour. Democracy for Mandela was hard work too. He taught us never, ever to rest on our laurels, never to take our rights and freedoms for granted and never to assume that we know better than the people we serve.

Mandela was a people person, and people loved him right back, not just for his many achievements, but simply for his humanity.

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Nobody gets to live forever, but some are never, ever forgotten. Rest in peace, Nelson Mandela. You made the world a better place, and the world will remember.

Applause.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 VISANT À SOUTENIR LES PETITES ENTREPRISES

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 5, 2013, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act / Projet de loi 105, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l’impôt-santé des employeurs.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Beaches—East York: further debate.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is one of those speeches where you make part of it one day and then a few days later you continue on, so I’d like to go back to where I started because I think this whole thing needs to tie together in one united speech. So, just very briefly, the things I talked about the last time—and in a preface of my previous comments.

This bill is a bill which I believe was engendered by the New Democratic Party. It was a bill that was part of the package of demands that we took forward to the government prior to the last budget coming down in March or April of last year. We made the demands because we felt that the budget needed to reflect some of the issues that New Democrats hold dear, and one of the issues that we held and continue to hold very dear is that where people or corporations or those who are well off have sufficient monies, they should pay their fair share for the running of this wonderful province. The demand was that we end the largesse, that we end monies going to large corporations, but that we continue to keep it going for smaller corporations, smaller companies so that they could have an employee tax credit. That was the demand we made, and over the course of weeks and maybe a month or so that followed, the government agreed with that demand. However, it was changed because New Democrats saw it as a way of putting nearly \$100 million into the treasury; the government saw it as a way to give more money to small corporations at the expense of larger ones.

Be that as it may, as I said the last time, New Democrats are good for our word and we are thankful that this was brought forward, although not in the guise and not in the way we had anticipated. We continue to want to work with the government in order to make sure that small business is successful, but we are also increasingly mindful that we cannot, as a province, sustain record levels of deficit in the long term. It is simply not sustainable that a government continues to run a \$10-billion-plus deficit year after year after year.

That’s what I spoke about the last time, Mr. Speaker, and now I’d like to go on with my speech about the difficulties in getting this bill before this House.

It would come as a surprise to many—and I know it certainly would come as a surprise to the Minister of

Finance—that this bill has taken so long, because New Democrats spoke in favour of it and, with some minor problem-raising, the official opposition spoke largely in favour of it as well, although I do commend my colleague the member from Thornhill, who actually brought it right down to perspective how much money was actually involved in small business, being some \$900 a year, or about the equivalent of what it would cost to hire one person plus their health care and other things for one week. It's not a huge amount of money that's been freed up to small business, but I'm sure that it's a welcome amount no matter how small it is.

You can understand my consternation when we started to get what I considered to be a few bullying tactics from the Minister of Finance. The Minister of Finance wrote me and my colleague from North Bay, from the riding of Nipissing, a letter back in November—end of October, beginning of November—telling us as the finance critics of our respective parties that we were not doing enough to push this bill forward. Now, I was taken aback when I got that letter.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Downright offended.

Mr. Michael Prue: I was offended, because I had spoken in favour of this bill in the House. I had done everything in my power to make sure that this bill made its way to committee, where it needed to go. I did not see or witness anything from my friend from Nipissing that did any different from what I did.

So I fired off a letter a couple of days—and I'd like to read it into the record, because I don't know where the government is coming down with this. I might not ordinarily have said anything about that initial letter, except I got another one on Sunday. I don't understand where this government is coming from, if they want speedy passage of this bill, if they attack members on the other side of the House, who are relatively blameless in what we are doing in terms of this—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: Well, I wrote back; I'm going to read what I wrote to the finance minister in November. I wrote to the finance minister, and I'm going to quote the whole thing:

“Re: Your letter of November 5, 2013”: This is to Mr. Sousa.

“Dear Minister Sousa,

“Thank you for your letter.

“I wish to draw your attention to the fact that we first proposed closing this loophole and providing small business tax relief several months ago. At every stage, the government has dragged their feet and refused to move forward with the simplest of measures. The government has shown they can move with lightning speed when it suits their political purposes; for example, the EllisDon bill. Now they're playing the same old games that are turning people off politics.

“For a government that claims not to like political games, you show a remarkable appetite for sandbox politics. Families and small businesses alike will be disappointed that the government chose to cast aspersions

and blame others for its failure to properly plan its legislative agenda.

“As you well know, there is a well-established process for setting the order of business of committees. So, I admit that the contents of the letter were puzzling. I attended no meeting where Bill 105 was discussed as the top Liberal priority. When committee business was set at subcommittee, your party indicated that Bill 21, Employment Standards Amendment Act (Leaves to Help Families), was its priority. The subcommittee agreed that the next two weeks of business would be composed of one week addressing Bill 21 and one week considering the study relating to the auto insurance industry. When PC members moved a motion, which they discussed beforehand, to look at issues regarding the Pan Am Games, we supported this in the interest of fairness: In the next two weeks, each party would have an issue of its choice on the agenda, and the government's choice was Bill 21.

“The government chose not to follow procedure. The government could have raised this issue with the House leaders, but did not. The government could have raised this issue at subcommittee, but did not. The government could have spoken to members of the committee beforehand to indicate a shift in priorities, but did not. Instead, the government chose to try to score cheap political points.

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“There are numerous options to move this bill forward according to standard procedure. I invite your House leader to raise them in order to ensure that changes long called for by New Democrats can be moved forward in a timely fashion. This place will work best when we all work within the system and follow the rules.

“Thank you again for your letter.”

It was signed by me, with copies to Ms. Horwath, Mr. Bisson, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, Mr. Hudak and Mr. Fedeli.

I would not ordinarily have said anything about this letter. I know that the government letter was a public letter, because I was asked by several reporters about it. We would not ordinarily have brought this out, except that yesterday I got another letter. This letter is again from Mr. Sousa. It's sent to both Mr. Fedeli and to me. It's dated December 8, which was Sunday. It came on a Sunday. It reads, “Dear Mr. Fedeli and Mr. Prue”—I'm not going to read the whole letter; just most of it.

Hon. John Milloy: Read the whole letter.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Come on. You've got an hour.

Mr. Michael Prue: The whole letter? Do you want the whole letter? You can have the whole letter:

“I was encouraged to see third reading debate begin on Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act. This is getting us closer to cutting taxes for more than 60,000 Ontario small businesses. If all parties can work together in the coming week to ensure this job-creating bill is passed before the House rises on Thursday, Ontario's small businesses won't be forced to unnecessarily pay higher taxes next February.

"This legislation is an essential part of our government's economic plan to support a dynamic and innovative business climate, helping ensure Ontario continues to be one of the most competitive places in North America to do business. If this legislation is implemented, 90% of small businesses in Ontario will no longer pay this tax.

"In order for the tax cut to take effect January 1st, I'm calling on you as the finance critics to lead your respective parties in agreeing to allow a final vote on the bill before the House rises on Thursday. If your parties refuse to allow the passage of Bill 105 before the House rises, small businesses will be forced to pay higher taxes on February 15th, when many businesses pay their first employer health tax (EHT) installment.

"This bill has already been subject to nearly sixteen hours of debate before being stalled at a committee, delaying progress for more than two months. Let's focus on passing this important piece of legislation and avoid further political games to ensure small businesses are spared unnecessary red tape and can benefit from this tax reduction in time for the new year."

It's signed Charles Sousa, with carbon copies to Tim Hudak, Leader of the Opposition, and Andrea Horwath, leader of the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, the umbrage I take is not in the beginning, because, yes, we are supporting this bill and, yes, the bill will do exactly what the finance minister says. The part that makes me take umbrage is that after I wrote to him, after I wrote and explained, if he did not already know it, that there was no delay from me or, as far as I know, from Mr. Fedeli, from the Conservatives, at any stage during this entire process—not in this House, not in the subcommittee of the finance committee, not in the finance committee itself. At absolutely no stage were any dilatory actions whatsoever taken by any of us, nor did I see any dilatory actions from my party. I am not subject to what goes on in the Conservative caucus, but I am unaware that any took place there. For the finance minister to state, "The bill has already been subject to nearly sixteen hours of debate before being stalled at a committee"—I don't believe it was stalled at any point. It was called before the committee when—

Hon. John Milloy: We had 16 hours, Michael.

Mr. Michael Prue: Sixteen hours of debate in this House. The government—the government—asked that the debate continue.

Secondly, it was not the New Democratic Party—
Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: If the minister can do anything but heckle, perhaps he can—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I need to be able to hear the member for Beaches—East York. He has the floor. Other members will have the opportunity to participate in the debate.

I return to the member for Beaches—East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: If there were 16 hours of debate in this House, it's because there were members in this House who wanted to speak to it. I certainly know my

own caucus stopped speaking to this bill long before, I think, eight days was up. But I do not preclude Conservative members, who felt it was important to speak—the right to speak. They thought it was important, whatever their issue or contribution was. That's what they did. But this letter is written to me, too.

Perhaps the government House leader, when he responds to my speech at the end, can simply state how it is that any member of the New Democratic Party, myself especially as the finance critic, had anything to do with stalling this legislation in the House, in the committee, in the subcommittee or any other place. I would like to hear that, because when aspersions are cast—as they are in this letter—about me and about my actions, I take considerable umbrage. I take considerable umbrage because this is totally wrong and misplaced. I take considerable umbrage when he went on to say: "Let's focus on passing this important piece of legislation and avoid further political games to ensure small businesses are spared" etc. Again, if it is said and if I am accused in the letter, which I'm sure will be made public at some point by the government opposite, I want them to spell out exactly what games I was playing, what games my party was playing. For a government that has been in power for 10 years, for a government that knows what they have to do, for a government that has a House leader who, in most cases, runs government business fairly well—calls the bills when they're necessary, sends the bills to committee, chooses which bills are called forward into committee—I find this very, very strange. It is not my doing what government bills end up before any of the committees of this House. It is the government's House leader who is responsible for determining whether Bill 21 had priority over Bill 105 or whether some other piece of legislation has priority. The decisions were made by the government of the day that other bills had priority before this one, and you proceeded with them. We did not, under any circumstance, try to delay the passage of any bill that I am aware of in the last two years; not one—save and except, maybe, EllisDon, which we thought was bad legislation.

Having said that, I also want to say a few things about my colleagues in the Conservative Party. When this came to committee—unfortunately, I was not there that day because I was otherwise occupied in a different committee dealing with the tip-out bill, which was before general government, which was my bill, and I had to be there.

Mr. Steve Clark: Did it get through?

Mr. Michael Prue: It got through, and I thank all the members on all sides of the House for that. It got through committee, anyway, and I'm waiting for the government House leader to call that into the House for third reading.

My colleagues in the New Democratic Party were there on the day when Bill 105 went to committee, and I know the New Democratic Party had not one amendment to make to the bill—nothing. We were satisfied with the bill.

I do have to state that I wonder sometimes about my colleagues in the Conservative Party. They must have

some pretty smart people who think up bright and witty and fun things. I want to read some of these into the record, too, because if there was a dilatory place anywhere or perhaps just a sense of fun, this is what happened with this bill when it got to committee. A couple of the motions—there were four in all; I'm only going to read three of them because one of them is hugely technical. The first one was changing the name of the bill. They came up with two things for the bill. Perhaps when my Conservative colleagues comment on my speech, they can say why they felt that this was important for a bill that's going to help small business, a bill that is not going to cost the taxpayers any money, a bill that is designed to get the economy going—would move a motion like this. And I quote from the PC motion: "I move that section 6 of the bill be struck out and the following substituted"—section 6 is the short title of the bill. It's going to change the bill from An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act to a bill that would be entitled—"The short title of this act is the Raising Taxes on Family-Owned Business in Ontario Act, 2013." On that subject—and I don't know what debate went on around this, but I can only assume it was designed, at least in part, to have some fun and waste a little of the committee's time.

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The second one was almost the same, Mr. Speaker. The short title of the bill was changed, I guess when that first one wasn't accepted. The title was changed, again, to read—"The short title of this act is the Robbing Peter to Pay Paul Act, 2013." Perhaps my friends might want to comment on that.

The New Democrats made no such motion in committee, and even the government has to acknowledge that this was perhaps done in jest, but certainly would have no bearing on the bill itself, nor do I think it wasted much time because the finance committee dealt with the entire bill in that same time slot, that same afternoon as general government was debating my bill on tip-ops.

The last one, though, was problematic to me, and I'm glad that it did not pass. The last one was the Conservatives'. It was a two-pronged motion but the second one is too complex. No one will understand it if I read it into the record. But the purport of the first one was, "I move that the definition of 'A' in subsection 2.1(2) of the Employer Health Tax Act, as set out in section 3 of the bill, be amended by striking out '\$450,000' and substituting '\$800,000'."

Now, if you just read that, you might wonder what that was. That was an attempt by the Conservatives to take a bill that was going to be relatively revenue-neutral, that had stood at \$400,000 for a number of years, move it up to \$450,000 for small business, but in the alternative, take it away from big business. By moving it to \$800,000, the effect of this bill would have cost the treasury half a billion dollars. I don't know, for a Conservative Party who stands there and says that they are trying to balance a budget, or that we cannot have a budget of \$10 billion in deficit, why they would move

such a motion that would move it another half a billion dollars in the red. Perhaps they can explain that. But in any event, that didn't pass. At the end of the day, the bill was passed without amendment and was sent back here for debate.

Now, all members of the House are entitled to debate it, and I hope they do. But I am also mindful of the time, and I do agree with the Minister of Finance that if this government can find the will and if this Legislature has the will, this can and should be passed by Thursday. There is no sense in delaying this until we come back at the end of February. There is no sense in not giving small businesses what they need and there is no sense in not giving that very small, slight stimulus to small businesses throughout the province.

New Democrats, Mr. Speaker, support the bill. We support the bill because it increases the amount that small businesses are going to be able to write off from \$400,000 to \$450,000, and it ensures that the money that is going to pay the net economic loss to the treasury comes from those businesses that can afford it, those that have more than \$5 million in revenue, and those which have, in almost all cases, more than 100 employees. This is meant to be money for small business, to get them started. It's not money for big business, to keep them going.

The second thing and problem we still have with this bill, although it is minor, is that we have a problem because we're not sure how the government is going to stop the problem of companies segmenting the workforce. What this means is that companies often can split themselves. Companies having \$5 million in profit in a year, 100 employees, can look at a bill like this and say, "We're going to set up two companies, two parallel companies"—almost like the Twix bars, almost like the ones that flow the caramel on top and the other ones that swirl the caramel on top. Companies can divide themselves, trying to get the extra revenue.

We are mindful that this happens quite a bit in terms of taxation policies, not around this employer health tax, but around a great many taxes where employers cut their company in half, in thirds or in four in order to get the best possible tax advantage. We want to make sure that this bill, if passed, works to the benefit of small companies and not merely to be given to larger companies that choose to segment their workforce, thereby setting up smaller companies to get under the \$5-million threshold.

Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to close—and I'm not going to speak for my whole hour. I don't need to. I'm not trying to be dilatory here. I'm not trying to do anything that's going to stop or hold up this bill. But I do want to close by saying that New Democrats came into this with good faith. We have acted at all times in good faith to try to get this bill passed because we know the importance of it to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and the small businesses they represent.

But we came in making this argument for this bill. In the beginning it was part of a larger package, and this

was one of the smaller parts of the package. As New Democrats, we are mindful that this government is in a \$10-billion deficit. We are also mindful that this Legislature is going to need to act on some very large priorities in the near future. We know that the Ring of Fire needs billions of dollars in order to put roads and railways, transportation and infrastructure, into it.

We also know that cities like Toronto, Hamilton, London, Windsor and Ottawa are desperately trying to get their transportation and their transit infrastructure in place. We have heard the figure being raised of some \$34 billion to end gridlock in Ontario, and we know that all parties in the Legislature have talked about ways of getting that money flowing in order not only to revive the economy but also to end gridlock, which is costing billions of dollars.

We have suggested, New Democrats, that there were other ways. This was part of the package. Bill 105 was a very small part of the package that we suggested. We also suggested at the same time that government should be doing much more, and they haven't done it. We suggested that, beginning in 2015, the government should stop the billion-dollar corporate tax loophole on the largest corporations on HST rebates, things like restaurants and box seats. You know, that's an annual cost of \$1.3 billion, and over the next 20 years, for the life of both the Ring of Fire and the transit, would bring in \$18.9 billion.

We have also suggested, as part of the package of which Bill 105 is a small part, that beginning in 2018 planned cuts in corporate tax rates from 11.5% to 10% will cost the treasury \$800 million a year or, over the 20 years, \$10.4 billion, which I would think can be used for a great many better purposes.

We are also mindful that, beginning in 2018, planned tax cuts only for individuals earning over \$500,000 a year will cost \$470 million to the treasury if that is phased out, or \$6.1 billion over 20 years. The total cost of these tax loopholes and giveaways that the government seems hell bent on going forward with, although there is a small sop now to small business, is \$35.4 billion, enough to build all the subways, all the transit systems and probably a railroad into the Ring of Fire.

For clarity, Mr. Speaker—I promise not to stray—what we're looking at here, from what I have described, the tax loopholes that the delayed HST, if we delayed that, we could save \$1.3 billion. If we brought corporate tax compliance into effect, we could save \$200 million a year. The EHT exemption is only \$100 million. But this is the kind of thing we were trying to convince this government needed to be done.

1550

I am thankful they listened in part. I am thankful that this bill has been brought forward, and I will do everything I can to make sure, by sitting down early, that this bill receives as speedy a passage as I can possibly give it. I would ask my colleagues to have measured speeches about the bill, whether you like it or not, and I would ask, if at all possible, that it be finished by Thursday afternoon.

But, Mr. Speaker, I cannot be like the finance minister and order that it be done, and I will not cast aspersions on anyone who is simply doing the duty that they are required to do. This is a deal that is traditionally done by the government House leader, often at meetings with the House leaders of the other parties: determining which bills will go forward, what kind of package will be brought, how long the speeches will be. When it is opened, then I think all members of this House have an obligation to the people they represent to say what they need to say.

Having said that, I think I have said what needs to be said and I ask that the bill be passed into law. I also ask that the political games need to stop if you are going to seek support in the future from me or this side of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It's a great opportunity for me to be in the House this afternoon to speak for a couple of minutes regarding Bill 105. I will admit that I didn't hear all of the comments made by the member from Beaches–East York. I did catch some of the beginning and most of the last little bit.

If I'm not mistaken, though, the member from Beaches talked about certain games that were being played and there was a discussion around what might or might not have taken place on this side of the House with respect to making sure that this very important bill could pass through this House in order to meet the deadline that everyone in the House is aware of, so that we can actually, as a government and as a province, continue to support small businesses in the new year.

It is my understanding that the member suggested that games were being played on this side of the House. Several times at the general government committee it was, in fact, members from that particular caucus that saw fit to do whatever they could to impede progress, which is unfortunate.

Every member in this House will have heard by now from the various representatives of the government caucus who have spoken extensively and rather eloquently about this particular bill, about how important it is to make sure that this particular piece, as with all others from budget 2013, move through the House to take effect so that we can continue moving forward with Ontario's economy to make sure that it grows, to make sure we remain a prosperous province.

So, as the member from Beaches did finish off in his remarks—and it is appreciated, I think, that he didn't use up his entire allotment today because it's so important that we make sure this bill does pass before the end of this year. I call on all members, as I have many, many times before on other pieces of legislation, to get behind this bill. It will move Ontario's economy forward. It will help us continue to be the greatest province in the best country in the world. I sincerely hope that members across all three caucuses will work with us to make sure this bill passes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I always enjoy listening to the member from Beaches–East York. He's made a few good points this afternoon, but I just want to talk about a few things.

He talked about political games. I guess I'm somewhat surprised, being fairly new in this Legislature, at the political games we see going on and the arrogance on the government side. When he talks about people coming into my office not knowing how they are going to pay their hydro bills, pay their rent, and he jokes about it being just another Tim Hortons coffee a year—math like that is scary. I know there are a lot of people in Ontario, but one coffee a year does not pay for that power plant fiasco.

I got a call the other day from somebody and he was furious with me, arguing, "What have you done to get rid of this government, these guys?" He called them a lot of names I can't repeat here. All I could say was, "We're trying our best."

We talk about a bill here, but I don't think they realize the urgency with business. We see businesses leaving all the time. While this bill has some merit to it, they've got to do something to stop the bleeding in this province. I mean, we look at some of the businesses—and these aren't our words. I heard this morning how competitive our energy prices are, but then I hear the Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers' Association say that our rates are higher, double what they are in Nashville, in many places in the States, double what they are in Montreal and in Vancouver, when you look at Toronto's rates.

I don't know where they get their numbers. I think obviously a lot of people would call those numbers something. But in my books, when you say something that there's so much evidence against—and whether there is evidence or not, we're looking at these companies leaving in droves. Every month, every week, there are another 700 or 1,000 jobs gone. We want to talk about affecting the deficit. Those taxes have a big impact on the deficit.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's an honour to be able to stand here and speak on behalf of the residents of Timiskaming–Cochrane, and to follow my colleague from Beaches–East York. He always explains things in a way that puts a new light on things. I'm going to use some of his words that I've never used before. One phrase he used several times was "taking umbrage." In northern Ontario, that would be, "We find it offensive." One of the things that we find offensive in this caucus is that the roots of Bill 105 were part of the package that we asked for to pass the budget. I believe the budget was passed in—help me here—April?

Mr. Steve Clark: You guys helped pass it.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, we did help pass that budget to get some of the things like Bill 105.

For the government to say, "Well, now, you people are holding things up," it was our idea and we gave it to you

in April. So is it us trying to hold things up? No, it's the same as the Financial Accountability Officer. It was our idea. We appointed somebody to the committee, and we had to drag it out of the other two parties.

Yes, this bill should go through, and the government should be the one who should quit playing games. This idea, a version of it was floated before April, was passed in April as part of the budget, and now we seem to be all surprised that "Oh, Christmas is coming, and we haven't got our agenda cleared."

People, please. This is a good bill. It's not going to save the world, but it's good for small business. The other side should quit playing games, and they should pass it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: There is, obviously, a variety of opinions on this bill, but I think the important thing to note is that if this bill does not pass on Thursday, small businesses in this province are going to have to pay higher than necessary business taxes starting on February 15, 2014. Now, parties either want that to happen or they don't; we don't. I understand the other parties are saying they're in support of that. There's a way to make that happen. Obviously, every member in this House is entitled to speak. I don't think anybody disputes that. We gauge how much we speak and what we say as to the pace that we want legislation to pass. It's that simple.

I don't think the letter that was sent to the critics was sent in the way it's being received, perhaps. What I understand the minister said in his letter was, "Let's set the partisan stuff aside. Let's get this bill through." If there's anything more than that, I certainly don't read that into the letter. More than 60,000 Ontario small businesses will benefit as a result of this. It will benefit their bottom line; it will benefit their ability to promote the jobs and the growth we need in this province.

We continue to work to try to make this province—I think that's with the opposition parties, as well—one of the most attractive places to do business on the continent. Any business with an annual payroll of under \$5 million will be exempt from paying the EHT on the first \$450,000 of payroll each year. It seems to me that we all agree that this should be done. It's a matter of trying to fit that passage of the legislation into the remaining time we have left, which is until Thursday of this week. So I'm hoping that the goodwill that can be applied to this piece of legislation will allow this bill to pass at some point in the future, hopefully before next Thursday, so that businesses will prosper as a result.

1600

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's it for questions and comments. We go back to the member for Beaches–East York for his response.

Mr. Michael Prue: I'd like to thank the members from Vaughan, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, Timiskaming–Cochrane and Oakville for their comments.

To the member from Vaughan: He has raised the issue, and it's the first time I've actually heard the general government committee mentioned in all of this. The letters that were sent to me were in my role on the finance committee, or possibly estimates, although I know that estimates had nothing to do with it. Certainly, I had never heard general government mentioned before. If it was in the general government committee, it was because it was sent there by the government House leader—the government chooses which committee to which to send bills, and it certainly had nothing to do with me.

The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry made the point of getting rid of this government. I know that I get letters like that every day too, but I have to remind people that we have a job to do here. Since the time of Bill Davis, the only opportunities we have to get rid of a government—there are only three options. One is at a throne speech, but we have to be prorogued first. The second is on the budget, and the third is on supply, which precedes the budget. That's it. In the meantime, New Democrats think we have to work on every single bill, in order to get the work done that needs to happen here in this House.

The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane made the point that we're not holding up anything. He also pointed out the Financial Accountability Officer. It seems to us that these are demands we made at the time of supporting the budget, things we expected were going to happen. Nine months or more have now dragged on—about nine months—since those demands were made, and we're still not seeing any concrete action. You have to understand our disappointment.

The member from Oakville made the point that he did not read into the letter the same things I did. But then again, the letter was not written to him.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I rise to speak for one hour on third reading of Bill 105, so settle in and get ready. We're going to talk about the Fedeli Focus on Finance a little later, but I am going to be speaking about the government's employer health tax legislation. This bill is currently named, and will be named, the Supporting Small Businesses Act, but I have to tell you that I am going to be the one to stand in this Legislature and explain the problems with that title, because the title also peels back and illustrates the problems underlying this whole bill.

This bill is going to provide tax relief to the tune of \$75 a month to small businesses and take away \$9,000 a year from family-owned businesses. That's exactly what this is going to do. We suggest, and we did suggest at committee—the member from Beaches–East York was actually right—that it be called the raising taxes on family-owned businesses act, because that's really what this is all about. The small amount of money, the \$75 a month, is all about being able to say we're doing something, when what you're really doing is much bigger.

I will take an hour to discuss that and illustrate to you what this bill is really going to be doing in Ontario.

Sadly, as I'll also discuss, I did bring those amendments to committee, but the government and third party coalition was activated, and we were unable to get this truth in advertising when it comes to this bill.

My comments over the next hour will focus on how little this particular piece of legislation actually does to address the spiderweb of destructive policies this government has implemented over the last 10 years, and how it will do nothing to prevent even more businesses from considering closing their doors for good or leaving Ontario like many have—and I'll talk about those—and relocating for good-paying jobs to other more business-friendly jurisdictions throughout Quebec and the States.

I can understand why the Liberals want to try to take ownership of this. Speaker, as you know, being here then, it was a PC government that first introduced the employer health tax exemption as a way to assist small business in the province by reducing their overall tax burden. This brought the \$400,000 exemption, which, by the way, on this bill, ekes up to \$450,000. That's the \$75 a month that I was speaking about.

Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, they say, but the Liberals had 10 years to offer true relief to small business in this respect. Only now they're acting, and, quite frankly, it's too little, too late.

For me and for my colleagues, this legislation here today exemplifies exactly what's wrong with this government and their approach to governing. They are unwilling to go far enough to take the decisive action that's needed to provide real tax relief for Ontario business.

When you think about the budget two years ago in the spring, Ontario was poised to have our corporate tax rate reduced from 11.5% to 10%. The Liberals promised that. Our PC Party is absolutely in favour of that. But in order to win the support of the NDP and make their coalition survive, the Liberals succumbed to the NDP desire and cancelled the tax rate. That, in effect, is a 1.5% tax increase to business in Ontario from what we were scheduled to see.

But, sadly, this bill is merely tinkering around the edges by this government and will not do enough to solve the obvious job crisis we have in this province: 600,000 men and women woke up again this morning without a job; 300,000 of them used to work in manufacturing, before the policies of this government hollowed out our once proud industrial backbone in Ontario.

There are actually more than a million Ontarians looking for work today. The Liberals have shown time and time again their willingness to speak out of both sides of their mouth when it comes to providing real help for small businesses in this province.

We saw this clearly at committee, Speaker. As a result of my motions not going through, many, many family-owned businesses will actually be paying \$9,000 higher taxes after the Liberals and the NDP joined forces to defeat our PC motion to amend Bill 105 at committee.

For example, we introduced an amendment to increase the employer health tax exemption to \$800,000, which was called for by the Canadian Federation of Independ-

ent Business, and which would have saved—truly saved—small business thousands of dollars annually. Then, certainly, it would have been truly called the Supporting Small Businesses Act.

Speaker, let me read from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business's letters. On October 29 they wrote to the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment. I read one of the sentences: "To ensure the ongoing economic competitiveness of Ontario's small and medium-sized firms, it is our standing recommendation that the government continue increasing the threshold in future years until it reaches \$800,000 in order to bring Ontario's" employment health tax "exemption closer to that of neighbouring provinces such as Manitoba. CFIB remains committed to working with the government and opposition parties to bring this to fruition."

On November 19, the CFIB wrote to our Premier, the leader of the third party, the leader of the New Democratic Party: "CFIB has long advocated for payroll tax breaks, and our standing recommendation is to eventually increase the EHT threshold to \$800,000 over time. Indexing future EHT threshold increases to inflation, as proposed in Bill 105, would help the province reach that target faster."

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Finally, on December 2, they wrote to our Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and said, "CFIB believes that Ontario's EHT exemption threshold should be comparable to that of other provinces and it is our standing recommendation to have it gradually increased to \$800,000 over time." Why would they want that? Because today Ontario has the single largest employee expenses in all of Canada. This is what we have: Our employee tax expenses are the single highest in all of Canada. Something is wrong here. So we proposed this exemption.

Let me read you a quote I received that very morning from one of the largest manufacturers in North Bay. This is his actual email when he realized that they were about to get dinged with a new tax: "Good gosh. Our payroll is over \$5 million. I have to ask my finance group what the actual dollar impact will be. One thing for certain: Once we are driven out of the province, the impact of these things will be zero. The more I read about Ontario's financial situation, the bleaker the future looks." That's an unsolicited letter from one of the largest manufacturers in the city of North Bay.

Interjection.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Yes, it was. I have stood in this Legislature and told you it was unsolicited. I don't like being impugned by that.

Employers told us what they needed, and they were flat out ignored by the Liberals and the NDP, who voted against the \$800,000 amendment. The new legislation also means that Ontario businesses with \$5 million or more in payroll will no longer be able to claim a tax exemption on the first \$400,000 of their payroll, increasing taxes on family-owned businesses, much like—the

business I'm referring to would be like the locally owned Canadian Tire in your riding, or the locally owned independent grocers in your riding. You know who owns these? Men and women who are neighbours of yours. This is thousands of dollars their taxes are going up to give this \$75 tax break to the small business. That's why we believe this also should be called robbing Peter to pay Paul.

This is all about the name, so this party can stand up and say, "Look at us, we're helping small business," when they really aren't, at the expense of medium, family-owned businesses. That's what they're doing. This doesn't cost the government anything or virtually anything. They talk about it being close to revenue-neutral. This is just all about moving the deck chairs on the Titanic around. That's all this is. This does nothing to help small business.

The Liberals and the NDP voted against our amendments to remove that cap and make it truly a tax credit for businesses—all businesses, not just tinkering at the edges. This new tax on family business will discourage them from hiring and expanding. This legislation is merely an eye drop of relief for Ontario businesses and the most minor of minor tax relief measures in the province with the highest payroll taxes in Canada.

As I said earlier, Ontario residents pay the most payroll taxes. It's actually \$9,970. The source is the Toronto Star, June 16, 2013, based on the Fraser Institute tax freedom day analysis. That's what our payroll taxes are in Ontario. That's what the highest taxes in Canada are. We need to put this legislation in context with the overall framework that this government has laid out, which is actually driving jobs, business and investment out of Ontario, fleeing—fleeing, Speaker—for more friendly places to do business. This fails to address the structural costs facing job creators.

I want to take some time to talk about why this minuscule movement on behalf of the Liberals toward helping small business isn't nearly enough to reverse the damage they've done over what I like to call the lost decade. I'd like to start off by discussing our debt, which has doubled—doubled—in just 10 years, from \$139 billion to \$273 billion. Remember, it took all those Premiers 137 years to grow our debt to \$139 billion. It took these guys 10 years, Speaker, to double it. Our debt is at record levels. The deficit has pushed the envelope of credulity. It is a must that the budget be balanced and that we get it balanced before 2017. It's a must that Ontarians finally get a break in their tax rate and that we get out of the business of corporate welfare. We must advocate for free trade and make sure it happens. Our paths to prosperity must be a two-way street.

As PC finance critic, I see a road back that won't be easy. Don Drummond told us that this will not be easy. There are tough roads ahead. But it can be travelled, and we will travel it as a team that wants nothing but the best for Ontario. We want Ontarians to be proud again. We want Ontarians to be working, and working in jobs that bring personal pride as well as a decent income. There's

no easy path here, Speaker. All you have to do is look around the GTA and Hamilton, and you see daily traffic gridlock that is costing us millions of dollars in lost productivity.

This legislation also does not address any—any—of the questions that I've raised for the finance minister in my series called Fedeli Focus on Finance. There are very serious questions, serious holes in this government's fiscal plan, that the minister apparently doesn't have any answers for. Let me take a few minutes and talk about these. I know that I have addressed them in this Legislature in the past, and for those of you who are following who want to have a greater understanding, and for my friend—I am sorry he's not here today—the Fedeli Focus on Finance can be downloaded at fedeli.com. You can subscribe to it.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: The full series for Christmas.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: You can get the full series. Email me and I'll email them to you. I'll also email the three various media stories that have been generated: the first, from the Globe and Mail, that talked rather nicely about Focus on Finance number 1; the Windsor Star, that had a great article and commentary and editorial on Focus number 2; and the Toronto Sun, actually—Simon Kent wrote a rather complimentary article about focus number 3.

What happened here, Speaker, is that back in the Dwight Duncan days, the former Minister of Finance, he talked about balancing the budget by 2017-18. What he said was that we would have an across-the-board wage freeze that would save this province \$6 billion in our budget by 2017-18. And that's it: all talk, no action. So we thought we would do a deep dive here and do an analysis from the Ministry of Labour's own website. They're the only source of information that we used for Focus number 1. Our team dived into that, and what we came up with was the fact that there was indeed no wage freeze across the board. Sadly, what we saw was that out of all of the agencies, boards, commissions and ministries, eight out of 10—80%—of those bodies actually had a wage increase of 1%, 2%, 3%, 4%—all different. Every one of them is documented. So you have to wonder, without the cornerstone, the real piece that's supposed to save the budget and balance the budget by 2017-18, how are you supposed to balance that when that cornerstone \$6 billion is not there? Of course, we ask the finance minister these questions and all we get is a lot of talk that says, "Yeah, yeah, yeah. We're going to balance." We'll talk about that in Fedeli Focus number 3, in a moment.

So we jump into Fedeli Focus number 2, which talks about the debt and deficit, and why that matters in Ontario. You have to appreciate, Speaker, that with this record debt of \$280 million, it brings two things. Number one, we had another deficit this past year, of \$9.2 billion, but we also had interest of \$10.4 billion. We're adding almost \$20 billion to our debt this year. We're growing that debt to that number. That interest is \$10.4 billion that we can't spend on health care. That's another \$10.4 billion that we can't spend on education. That's why we

see cuts to physiotherapy for seniors. That's why we see cuts to cataract surgery. That's why knee replacements take 18 months, if you're lucky. This is why the debt and deficit matter to Ontarians.

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We'll continue to drill into this. I know that's a boring talk: debt and deficit. It couldn't be more boring to people. But this is a very important topic when you understand that our deficit is larger than all other provinces' deficits combined.

Here we hear the excuses: "The dog ate my homework"; "It's the feds' fault"; "Everybody is in a global recession." Everybody else has recovered and is doing very nicely, thank you. We're the laggard again, not just in Canada but worldwide. We are this laggard. Our debt-to-GDP when these guys took over was 27%—a revered number worldwide. Today, it's over 37%, and their own statistics tell us it's going to 40%.

That's why we get compared to Greece—because when Greece's trouble started, their debt-to-GDP was 37%. We get compared to the laggard in the States, California, because we both had around a \$10-billion deficit—except for the fact that they're three times larger than we are and have that capacity to pay for it. We're three times smaller and we have the same deficit. We're compared to Detroit—the bankruptcy now in Detroit. Our debt per person in Ontario is in the \$20,000 range. Well, guess what? Detroit, which is now bankrupt—their debt per person is in the \$20,000 range. That's why you hear people compare us to Greece, California and Detroit. Pick one of the three and that's trouble. We're compared to all three. Those are indisputable facts.

Let's talk about what is being hidden from the public now. In Fedeli Focus on Finance number 3, we got into the fact that we have—all of the revenue is shown. We asked the finance minister, "How are we going to balance the budget?" All they say to us now is, "We're going to balance," but if you look closely, what they've done is—all the numbers on how to get there are now not available. That's the first time here in our budget system that those numbers are blanked out; you can't see. They just continue to show the bottom totals that say we're going to somehow magically balance. They do hide the numbers from us, Speaker. Why? Because they can't get there anymore.

Speaker, this legislation comes at a time when we're struggling with skyrocketing hydro costs, increases to WSIB premiums, a College of Trades tax, restrictions on the skilled trades through outdated apprenticeship ratios, and a forest of red tape and regulations that strangle the ability of Ontario's businesses to prosper.

Let's look at energy rates, especially given that we're now more than three years past the Oakville power plant cancellation. Ontario's industrial rates are the second-highest in North America. Just today the energy minister stood up and somehow boasted that our energy rates, especially in northern Ontario, were the lowest, and I'm thinking, "Really? I don't get that." First of all, Xstrata Copper, which was in northern Ontario, was the single

largest user of power in all of Ontario—they were lured across the border by the province of Quebec for cheap power. How could they have gone for cheaper power when we're supposed to, according to our minister, have the cheapest power? One of them is not being accurate and factual with us, Speaker, and I'm going to tell you which one it is.

Let's look at the one thing he forgot to mention today. He forgot to mention the global adjustment. He was very coy. I'm sure if I look at his record this morning, he was talking about the one little line on the energy bills, and that's the real-time pricing. Yes, he may have been accurate in that statement; that indeed may be one of the lowest, but that is not the total of your hydro bill.

I've picked a hydro bill from a large manufacturer in North Bay, again. Their hydro bill, for just the pricing of hydro, is \$43,762.84 this one particular month. For them, that's about \$500,000 a year. That's the price of their energy—just the energy. So the minister might have been accurate when he was talking very narrowly about one line of the many lines. What he failed to mention is the global adjustment, the big pot that they dump all the expenses in, such as the gas plant scandal cost of \$1.1 billion and the rich subsidies to wind and solar. Dump all that in the pot. That pot added 4.28 cents—about four and a quarter cents—a kilowatt hour to this guy's hydro bill. Remember, his hydro was \$43,700 a month. This global adjustment—something that Quebec doesn't pay and Manitoba doesn't pay and the States don't pay; this is added to his hydro bill—is \$73,395.96. That is \$1 million a year added to his hydro bill that the minister kind of forgot to mention, by the way.

This is a year ago; this is February 24, 2012. Speaker, that's when the global adjustment was 4.25 cents. Today, I went on the IESO's website. Today, the global adjustment is 7.6 cents a kilowatt hour. When I take his hydro bill and multiply it by 7.61 cents, while his hydro was \$44,000 this month, his global adjustment is \$130,000. That's \$1.5 million a year that the energy minister forgot—I'll use the word “forgot”—to tell us about. That's what happened.

That's the global adjustment. It's the government's catch-all fund for the misdeeds and mistakes they've made in the energy file, including the power plant cancellations—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): A point of order, the member from Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, I always enjoy listening to my colleague and his interesting theories; however, his meanderings on electricity policy have nothing to do with a bill that has to do with An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I acknowledge the point of order, and I would remind the member for Nipissing that we are, in fact, debating third reading of Bill 105. It would be helpful if his comments could come back to the bill.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. My point that I'm making to the member across is that their bill is

tinkering at the edges when there are real problems for businesses in Ontario. You may not want to talk about the real problems in Ontario, but to me, Speaker, you need to understand those core problems and what is killing business in Ontario to illustrate to these people why this bill of theirs isn't going to solve the problems. So I will continue for a couple of minutes, Speaker, on the long-term energy plan and what it's doing.

This is certainly an energy folly here. Rates have tripled. When this government took over, energy was 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour. Today, the highest rate you can pay in business is 12.9 cents a kilowatt hour, as of November 1; Speaker, that's three times. You wonder why this company's bill, their global adjustment—their bill now is \$180,000 a month instead of \$40,000. This is one particular example.

This is what's killing business, and we just got told this past week that now, all of a sudden, the rates are going to skyrocket. What a way to run a government. This is—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I ruled on the previous point of order.

Point of order.

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Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, it is, in fact, the same point of order: standing order 23(b). The Speaker did rule on it, and the member has not gone back to the subject of the bill.

Interjection: Enforce the ruling, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Actually, he did go back to the subject of the bill, and then he returned to the basic argument he was making. I return to the member for Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker. Again, let me remind the government that this bill is tinkering at the edges. We've got to understand what is genuinely happening in Ontario so that we can understand how to fix it. I know you don't want to talk about your disastrous energy policy. To the member: I understand that. We sat across from each other during the gas plant scandal hearings, where we disclosed \$1.1 billion. This government continued to say all along that it was \$40 million and \$190 million, but the auditor came out with \$1.1 billion. Somebody has to pay that. So it's being added to your hydro bills, which are now increasing, which is why these guys have come out with this bill that's going to give small businesses \$75 a month so they can stand here and say it's the small business saviour act. This is what it's all about.

They're trying to bluff the businesses of Ontario that this is really something to help small business, when we know that reining in this ridiculous energy policy is what we need. I won't even get into the entire Green Energy Act—in fact, there's absolutely nothing green about the Green Energy Act. But that folly is also adding one of the richest subsidies in the world, and that folly is also hurting small business, which is why these guys do not want to talk about energy and want, instead, to talk about

some kind of bill that will do absolutely nothing it is named to do.

I talked about one of the businesses where this morning the energy minister—he said we have the lowest energy. I talked about Xstrata Copper. This bill would not have helped Xstrata Copper. This bill would have added to Xstrata Copper's taxes—to their employee health tax—here in Ontario. Would this bill have stopped them from moving to Quebec? No. They moved to Quebec because we make green energy at night, when we don't need it. The auditor told us just recently that we've paid \$1.8 billion to Quebec and to the States to take the surplus power.

In November 2011, the auditor told us that in the first 10 months of 2010, we had already paid Quebec and the US \$420 million. That's \$500 million a year—\$500 million. That had to be added to somebody's bill. Somebody had to pay that. Not only do we pay Quebec to take our power—we pay them to take it—but they turn around and knock on the door of Xstrata Copper and say, "Look at all this cheap power we have. Why don't you cross the border and open up here?" So they shed 672 jobs in Ontario and moved across the border. That's what is happening. That's what they don't want to talk about. That's exactly what they don't want to talk about.

Speaker, I could carry on about this—maybe one more minute, if they'll allow me. I'm going to talk about what I call the law of unintended consequences. It's a very important point that the Auditor General also told us. When the so-called Green Energy Act was invented, they did not do a business study. There was no business case written. So they had no idea what the law of unintended consequences was going to be. And so, Speaker—

Mr. Bob Delaney: On a point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member from Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I draw the Speaker's attention to standing order 23(b)(i). The question under discussion has nothing whatsoever to do with the Green Energy Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Again, I would acknowledge the member's point of order and, again, remind the member from Nipissing that if he chooses to talk about these kinds of subjects related to small business and larger businesses, he has to bring his comments back to Bill 105. I would remind him of that.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. I'll end the chapter on energy here by suggesting that if we continue with this government's energy policies, those businesses won't be coming back again. Our industrial rates are, indeed, the second-highest in all of North America, and we need to make affordable energy a priority.

So, let's talk about business—any business—and ask them what their three biggest input costs are. They'll tell you that they're taxes, energy and labour—or, in Premier Wynne's Ontario, strike one, strike two, strike three and, unfortunately, they're out. They're out in droves, Speaker. I want to talk to you about the number of businesses that have fled Ontario under this government, that won't be coming back, even with passage of this legislation.

This legislation gives \$75 a month to small businesses, but it takes \$9,000 away from each family-owned business. That's the problem.

Let me read you the names of some companies that have announced that they've had enough of Ontario's business climate: Caterpillar, whose jobs went to Indiana; Heinz, whose 1,000 jobs relocated to Ohio; US Steel, who shut down in Hamilton; in North Bay, Sandvik, who'd been there for quite a while, gone to New Brunswick; Xstrata Copper, as I mentioned, in Timmins: 672 jobs gone to Quebec.

Some of the other recent closing announcements include Sklar Peppler in Ajax; GM transmission and assembly plants in Windsor; ExxonMobil chemical films in Belleville; Saputo dairy in Brampton; Navistar in Chatham; Daimler trucks in London and St. Thomas, and their bus factory in Mississauga; Edscha in Niagara Falls; GM Camaro production in Oshawa, gone to Lansing, Michigan, as well as their 110-year-old operation in St. Catharines; Tender Tootsies in Glencoe; Faurecia in Bradford—we just heard that one last year.

Add to that the 60 mills in Northern Ontario—that's eight out of every 10 mills; 80% of all of these mills are closed forever. That includes Resolute Forest Products in Fort Frances, who just last week shut down another paper line and sent 60 people home. This is a shocking display of what has happened in the Ontario that I grew up in.

This legislation won't do anything to reverse the damage through the increase in WSIB premiums forced upon small businesses. Again, this awards \$75 a month to small businesses, and they pay for it by taking \$9,000 from a smaller group of family-owned businesses. That's how they're paying for this. They're robbing Peter to pay Paul.

Let me read you my February 1, 2000, press release where we talk about the damage that's being done by WSIB. Now, if that's a tax area that you wanted to fix, we'd be sitting here talking about this.

"Upon recall of the Ontario Legislature this month, the Liberals and their new leader need to repeal Bill 119 and its crippling tax on small businesses." That's a tax on small business that they should be talking about, Speaker, not this made-up savings. This tax hurts independent tradespeople and contractors.

I was joined by Steve Ciglen, Brent Tremblay and John Best at the launch of the "Fix the WSIB" campaign to protest that new tax on independent operators, sole proprietors, partners in partnerships and executive officers of corporations that came into effect on January 1. Now that is a tax on business.

This tax that they're adding to medium-sized business, family businesses—I expect the same kind of reaction.

This WSIB tax is, plain and simple, a tax on hard-working Ontarians designed to cover up the Liberal government's mess. This is the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board's—the WSIB's—\$14-billion unfunded liability. They created a tax to pay that off. In this particular case, it's virtually revenue-neutral. They create a tax on family-owned businesses to give it out to the small business community, \$75 a month.

The WSIB tax is cutting into the earnings of small businesses and contractors, and for some it could be the straw that breaks the camel's back. The stated goal of Bill 119 was to capture more people to pay mandatory premiums who are unlikely to ever claim for an injury. I warned at that time that there's no relief to those who already pay the WSIB. Speaker, this is a clear example of an area they should be fixing, a tax that they imposed that has unintended consequences. They impose a tax; businesses close.

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Here, on the small business tax, they're imposing a tax on family-owned businesses. We already can imagine what the results will be.

This act will not reverse the College of Trades tax that targeted independent contractors in Ontario. It's severely hampering the ability to hire and create jobs, and for some, it's killing their ability to stay in business at all.

You heard me read that comment from that one local company, that unsolicited comment where they had said, "Enough's enough." What they had said, again: "Once we are driven out of the province, the impact of these things will be zero. The more I read about Ontario's financial situation, the bleaker the future looks."

Speaker, back to this College of Trades tax, again, we did a survey in partnership with the North Bay and District Chamber of Commerce, and 77% of the respondents said personal income taxes should be the first taxes to be cut. It was very valuable feedback. Seventy per cent said they believe a training tax credit would be valuable in helping train their employees, while 73% don't believe the arbitration system for public sector labour disputes is working. Sixty per cent believe time-of-use electricity pricing should be optional. The survey also shows—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to hear the member for Nipissing.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I don't think he knows we already cut personal income taxes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan to please come to order. And I would say to the member for Nipissing, again, his remarks need to come back to Bill 105.

The member for Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. Again, what I'm trying to illustrate here is that on Bill 105, this is tinkering around the edges, coming up with a name of a bill where they can run out and say, "Look at me. Look at me. We're helping small business," when, really, what they've done is robbing Peter to pay Paul. There's no money; there's no wealth being added. There's no net tax break. They're taking the money from family-owned businesses and redistributing it to smaller business when, really, what we've got here are problems they should be fixing.

The survey showed overwhelming support for the government to be more transparent and to cut red tape. Now, that's a bill that we would get behind. In fact, we have brought these bills to the floor of this Legislature,

and this government has voted against our bills time and time and time again, bills that would do real good for the business community: cutting corporate taxes, which this government did not do in the budget of 2012. In fact, they should have cut the taxes from 11.5% to 10%, but in order to satisfy their coalition with the NDP, we did not see that tax break. That's basically an increase of 1.5% in the taxes that the business community had anticipated.

You wonder why, and I've said this in this Legislature before, this patient capital, or dead money, as some call it—we have \$500 billion in the banks of large businesses in Canada. They will not invest it in Ontario because this government is unpredictable. They tell you they're going to lower corporate taxes, and then they don't lower them. They tell you one thing, and they do the other. That's the problem. They tell you that this is a tax savings, but really it's just shuffling the cards. There's no net cost here. So what they really should be doing, as I was talking about the WSIB, is fixing that. The College of Trades: They should be fixing that.

But this isn't the end of the new taxes this Liberal government wants to hit us with. The expensive tax-and-spend policies that they have are needed to feed that addiction that they have to spending. In the gas plant scandal hearings, those documents, 186,000 documents, we discovered this government is considering nearly 50 new taxes and fees to pay for their gross overspending and incompetence.

The first of those, driver's licence fees, which they denied, suddenly were implemented in September. Our leader, Tim Hudak, stood on this floor and brought out the long list: adding 75 cents to your phone bill, increasing the HST by 1%, adding five cents to a litre of gas, increasing hunting and fishing licences, increasing your driver's licence fee. They denied them all, "No, we're not doing that," and then very shortly, only a couple of weeks later, they did that. That's a tax that they're adding.

Mr. Bob Delaney: A point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, standing other 23(h) forbids the member from making an allegation, which is what the member has just done. As well, he has strayed yet again from the subject of Bill 105.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I didn't hear a false allegation made by the member for Nipissing to another member.

I would again return to the member for Nipissing, and he has the floor.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker—
Mr. Shafiq Qadri: So disingenuous.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the member to withdraw that unparliamentary remark.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I withdraw, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you for the floor, again, Speaker.

Quite simply put, perhaps if this government was more interested in actually helping small business than putting the Liberal Party interests first, they could have done more before now.

Ten years, an election looming, and all of a sudden we're going to have bills with great names—signs that they can slap up: "Look at us. Aren't we the great guys? Look what we've done."

This legislation does not go back and undo the billion dollars that was wasted on eHealth. This legislation that's going to increase taxes on family-owned business will not go back and undo the almost billion dollars wasted on Ornge; Dr. Mazza's \$9.3-million payout that the minister turned a blind eye to. This Bill 105 certainly can't go back and undo the disastrous Mississauga and Oakville power plant cancellation that added \$1.1 billion to our hydro bills—incidentally, Speaker, the auditor reminded us that \$513 million of that was the result of the Liberal decision to place the new plant in Napanee. That ill-fated decision alone, which was made long after the cancellation, added \$513 million to this debacle.

This legislation, Bill 105, also can't fix the Liberals' faulty math surrounding the decision to sell off the ONTC. Of course, we're going to learn more about that in the auditor's report tomorrow. It's very interesting to point out that the Liberals—in the announcement by the former minister and in the announcement by the former finance minister, both have announced this will save \$265 million. Well, we caught you red-handed again. In the gas plant scandal documents, there they were: letters from the treasury board, from cabinet and from the finance ministry, that, "No, no, there's not going to be any \$265-million savings; this is going to add \$790 million." That's a—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to be able to hear the member for Nipissing. I'd appreciate the House coming to order. The repeated interjections are particularly annoying.

I would ask the member for Nipissing to resume his comments, and again remind him that we're discussing Bill 105 and his comments have to come back to Bill 105.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. I know that they don't want to talk about the billion-dollar spread at Ontario Northland. That's why they come up—this government has a knack for coming up with clever names—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Once again, I ask the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan to please come to order and respect the rules of the House.

The member for Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. This bill is just another example of this government saying things to appear like they're doing something, but they're only hollow words. This government has a knack for coming up with clever names for bills which actually do the opposite. This is the Supporting Small Businesses Act, and while it indeed does support small business, it's

purely at the expense of family-owned businesses. This is a zero-sum game. It doesn't cost the government much, if anything. They get to stand up and say, "Look at us. We're doing something for small business." That's to make up for all the things they actually did to destroy small business in Ontario.

1650

Again, Speaker, they're robbing Peter to pay Paul. They're shuffling the deck chairs on the Titanic. That's all that this bill is doing. It won't do anything to bring Cliffs Resources back and erase the government's abysmal management of the Ring of Fire development: 1,200 permanent jobs, 2,500 construction jobs tied to chromite. They're not materializing as a direct result of this government. Again, they're tinkering on the edges.

Now we have the latest spending scandal surrounding the Pan Am Games. This bill isn't going to do anything to target executive expenses for parking or coffee or the \$700 million for the athletes' village that's not in the budget.

For all of these reasons listed and so many others, this legislation does little, if anything, to improve the overall picture for small business in Ontario and for our economy as a whole. Again, it's too little too late.

Now, Speaker, I will address the specific content of the bill, which we tried to amend to make it fairer for all Ontarians and to provide some real relief to them. Unfortunately, the Premier turned on the coalition button and, on cue, the Liberals and NDP became one to defeat the best interests of Ontario's family-owned businesses yet again.

The content of the bill: The bill proposes to increase the exemption amount from \$400,000 to \$450,000—like I said earlier, about four times—for the 2014 to 2018 calendar years, with the amount to be adjusted for inflation each year starting in 2019. So while the intent and the name suggest it will help small business, it's all about the Liberals realizing that their policies are actually killing Ontario business. It isn't enough that the overall context of the legislation or the government's policies are taken as a whole; it also proposes to implement a new exemption threshold for companies with a payroll of \$5 million or more. Again, this is a zero-sum game. I can't stress this enough. The government says it will help 60,000 small businesses, and it will: \$75 a month. But 5,000 family-owned businesses and medium- and large-sized businesses in the province, the businesses that also create jobs, will pay more. Further, this hurts their ability to compete in the global marketplace by adding to their input costs. That's what's happening.

Again, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, as I read in their letters, want the exemption to go to \$800,000. That's a significant tax savings for business. We brought that amendment and said, "People, here's some real meat that will actually help businesses in Ontario, and that amendment can stand." They voted against it. The NDP and the Liberals voted against that amendment, voted against small business, voted against the Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

Instead, we go from \$400,000 to \$450,000, marginal at best, a \$75-a-month saving for businesses with 100 employees and under. But we get to be able to stand here and say, “We’ve helped small business—at the expense of family business.”

This also allows the minister to make regulations providing for special rules that apply to employers who are associated with registered charities. Now, this is an area that I’m a bit concerned with as well, because this makes the minister have the ability to arbitrarily change things through regulation around charities. I just want to remind you of the cricket club scandal. That’s how these things happen, when the Ontario Cricket Association gets \$1 million when they only asked for \$150,000. This is just setting the table for another Liberal minister to change the rules to benefit somebody friendly to their government. That beacon has to go on because that’s part of what this bill is.

Speaker, let me read you specifically our motions that the NDP and the Liberals voted against. These are motions that would have truly helped small business and made a difference.

“I move that the definition of ‘A’ in subsection 2.1(2) of the Employer Health Tax Act, as set out in section 3 of the bill, be amended by striking out ‘\$450,000’ and substituting ‘\$800,000.’” Now we’re talking.

Interjection.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: No, we did vote on it already and, sadly, the Liberals and NDP voted against it. That’s what would have helped small business. That’s the kind of thing we needed. Instead, it got turned down. So there’s no real tax savings for the small business; there is one in name in \$75.

The next motion that we had—this is the one to kill this part of the bill that’s going to add \$9,000 in taxes to 5,000 businesses. Again, the motion that we brought forward, that our committee brought forward, is:

“... in which the employer,

“(a) has one or more permanent establishments in Ontario, and

“(b) is an eligible employer.”

That’s basically what we’re saying, that everybody should have this exemption. Sadly, of course, we saw the Liberals and the NDP vote down, strike down, a motion that would have stopped these family-owned businesses having a \$9,000 bill added to their taxes. Again, we already have the single greatest employee taxes in all of Canada at almost \$10,000 a year. That’s the single highest in all of Canada, and we’re about to double that for 5,000 of our businesses. How the heck can that be called a “saving taxes” or “lowering taxes” bill? That’s an area I’m very concerned with as well, Speaker.

To answer all these questions that I had—and much like the member from Beaches East-York mentioned earlier, we both received a letter from the finance minister on the weekend; Sunday, as a matter of fact. Here is my response, Speaker:

“Dear Minister,

“Thank you for your letter regarding Bill 105.

“Minister, it’s my hope that you will personally take part in third reading debate on this legislation, as you need to explain to Ontario’s family-owned businesses why you are raising taxes on them and creating yet another deterrent for them to create jobs and expand their businesses here in Ontario.

“You also need to explain to them how this eyedrop of relief could possibly come close to counteracting the matrix of devastating anti-business policies and decisions your government has undertaken over the past decade, including tripling of hydro rates with plans for another 42% increase over the next five years, the new WSIB and College of Trades taxes, your refusal to lower corporate taxes as part of your budget sellout to the NDP, and the billions of dollars wasted in scandals such as eHealth, Ornge, gas plants and Pan Am Games, just to name a few.

“Minister, it is also my hope you will come to the Legislature to answer even one of the series of questions we’ve posed in our finance series regarding your flawed fiscal plan, such as, how can you possibly tell Ontarians with a straight face that you are still going to balance the books by 2017-18 when you planned to save \$6 billion on wage freezes, but gave wage increases to eight out of every 10 contracts you negotiated over the past three years?”

I ended by saying, “I am looking forward to hearing from you in the chamber during third reading debate.”

Speaker, we are very concerned with this bill. I have said several times that the Supporting Small Businesses Act should actually be called the Raising Taxes on Ontario’s Family-owned Businesses Act, because that is truly what we’re seeing happen here.

1700

Only the PC caucus has a real plan to put people back to work in Ontario, to restore economic growth and bring us back to our rightful place as the economic engine of Confederation. That’s the Ontario that you and I both grew up in, when you never, ever heard your parents talk about their hydro bill and how it was a decision whether to pay their hydro bill or something else. You would imagine getting your Visa bill in the mail and being afraid to open it. Now they’re afraid to open their hydro bill.

Mr. Bill Walker: Energy poverty.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My seatmate calls it “energy poverty,” and it’s—I’d like that on the record. That is what has happened in Ontario, Speaker.

Only the PC Party has a plan to free businesses from the tax and regulatory burden this government has placed on them so they can invest and create the jobs that Ontarians deserve.

Speaker, I was in business a big chunk of my life and did business all over the world. I can tell you the three things that would worry me today: high taxes, high energy rates and red tape. Any of those three will strangle businesses. Any three of them together will kill business. You heard me reading a long litany of businesses. These businesses aren’t going bankrupt, these businesses aren’t

closing up, because the economy is bad. These businesses are picking up in Ontario and moving to a place where they can actually get business done. They're moving to Quebec. They're moving to the States. They are moving; they are not closing up.

This legislation is more proof that this government and their NDP coalition partners simply aren't willing to take the decisive action that's needed to get our province turned around and headed in the right direction again, Speaker, to the Ontario that you and I grew up in. When you look at this bill in the overall context of the direction of the government, it simply isn't close to going far enough. That's why we need change, the change of team here at Queen's Park. The only thing that's going to change the direction of the province of Ontario is to change the government.

I thank you for the hour, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I will give the member from Nipissing full credit for filling a full hour. I want to comment on what he said. He said very little about Bill 105 in its essence. We did hear a fair amount about the Fedeli Focus on Finance. I thought I just might introduce Fife's finance facts, just for good spirit.

Corporate tax cuts have not created more jobs, as evidenced by the last 10 years of the Liberal government. Job creation tax credits work. In fact, if you incentivize job creation and then you reward those job creators, you attract jobs, you hold jobs; you reward those companies that are loyal to the employees that they have within their businesses, and they do not leave for Indiana, Wisconsin, Michigan and Ohio, which are the very states that the PC caucus hold up as the epitome of what kind of economy we want to create in the province of Ontario.

Interjection: Heinz.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Heinz went to a state that had a job creator tax credit, and they received almost \$500,000 for doing so.

Fact number 3: Small businesses are significantly different than large corporations and should be treated as such. Small businesses—the member from Nipissing has decided not to mention this—have actually received the relief that this Bill 105—they have actually received it positively, because they lobbied for some tax relief, and we listened to them.

Now, I'm going to be able to speak a little bit more a little bit later on, but it was my pleasure to share Fife's finance facts.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, we had really hoped for a discussion on a bill to reduce taxes for some 60,000 small businesses in Ontario. Instead, the first three quarters of the member for Nipissing's dialogue were devoted to basically a self-promotion effort for what appears to be a blog. Now, it's parliamentary convention, Speaker, that a member is not allowed to use the name of another member, but the convention is actually silent on whether

the member can use his own name. One actually wonders about that. Though I was tempted to call it the focus on fiction, I think I'm going to stay within parliamentary convention and I'm going to call it the Nipissing notes on nothing.

While we listened to the meanderings, we talked about something that was completely off-topic. In that spirit, I would remind the member he cannot complain about the competitive edge of the Federal Republic of Germany. Now, according to today's *Globe and Mail*, "Germany's electricity costs are among the highest in Europe, approximately 40 cents per kWh compared to 10 cents in Ontario."

Let's come back to this bill. This province needs these reforms to keep Ontario the most competitive place in North America in which to do business, and that's right. Although the member incorrectly asserts the opposite, Ontario has the lowest tax rates in the Great Lakes and Midwestern States and the optimum cost of doing business right here in North America's industrial heartland. We want 60,000 Ontario businesses to get a tax reduction; clearly, he and his party do not.

Speaker, thank you very much for the time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I found this hour by our finance critic captivating, explaining how Bill 105 removes the tax exemption for family business. I realize that Bill 105 does nothing for some very bad news that we have received today in Norfolk and Elgin. Trillium Railway will cease to exist December 20. Their clients include Cargill AgHorizons, Norfolk FS in Courtland, the Growmark fertilizer plant in Delhi, the ethanol plant in Aylmer and Tillsonburg businesses, including Johnson Controls, Wellmaster Pipe and Supply, Kissner Group, International Beams and Future Transfer Company.

This is very bad news for our area. This was a short-line railway. Short-line railways were fostered and breathed new life about 20 years ago. We're debating Bill 105. It will do nothing for these companies, especially those companies that are losing the exemption. Given the urgency of this matter, I do ask this government, I ask the Minister of Transportation to pick up the phone and talk to the federal level of government. See what you can do to not only maintain this rail line, but we wish that we could see an enhancement of the main line to bring it up to the 285,000 required by many of these businesses to raise the—285,000 pounds, the weight that could be carried. A lot of these cars are running on a lower weight.

So very bad news today, Speaker, and it falls hard on the heels of our area just recently losing Georgia-Pacific about a week ago and the Bick's Smucker's operation in both Dunnville and Delhi.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My big concern about this bill, Bill 105, is not the content, in the sense that we have been for a long time asking this government to consider not exempting companies that are making \$5 million in

payroll or more. That idea was something the NDP has promoted and supported.

The issue I do have with this bill, though, is, when it says “small business act,” it purports to be something far greater than it really is. The act does only one narrow thing: It provides a recognition that small businesses are different than large businesses, but only provides a way to address that in one narrow fashion with the employment health tax. What we really need to see happen, in a meaningful way, to acknowledge the difference between a small business and a multinational corporation is that we need a concerted effort to create policies broader than one singular exemption. We need to create policies that would create a climate that allows small businesses to flourish. We need to do more than one tax exemption and look at a broader way to encourage small businesses, which we know are the primary drivers of new job creation.

1710

What we really need to see is a true small business act which would actually create strong incentives to support the entrepreneurs in our society, that would create incentives for small businesses and that would support family-owned businesses in our communities, because they drive our economy. We need to do something to assist them, and we need to make a clear distinction between those multinational, billion-dollar or multi-million-dollar corporations and the very successful mom-and-pop shops and smaller businesses in any field, whether it's technology, health, law or business. We need to encourage them and support them in a meaningful way.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's it for questions and comments. I return to the member for Nipissing to reply.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I would like to thank the members from Kitchener-Waterloo, Mississauga-Streetsville, Haldimand-Norfolk and Bramalea-Gore-Malton for their further contribution to Bill 105.

Earlier, we heard from the member from Beaches-East York. In his summation, he talked about being accused of delays and that type of thing. I, too, want to weigh in on that, because we have indeed seen a delay here. The Liberal government sent this to a committee that they knew was chock full. It delayed this bill by two weeks as they kept tinkering with it being at that wrong committee, when the finance committee was free and able to hear what you would actually expect—a finance issue.

Instead of finance, they sent it to another committee that was seized with hearing the Pan Am scandal. The purpose of that was to try to jostle the Pan Am scandal off the agenda and get this in. They lost—wasted—two weeks of time, and now they're scrambling, so when I hear this disingenuous comment that, “Oh, you're wasting our time,” that type of thing, I have to say that I take umbrage with that, because it is indeed the Liberal Party that has wasted the time by sending it to a committee to try to block the Legislature from dealing with yet a different important issue, the Pan Am scandal.

Speaker, I wanted to talk to you about that in the two minutes that I had here, and I thank you for the opportunity to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to ask the member for Nipissing to withdraw his unparliamentary remark.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I withdraw, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to speak briefly to Bill 105's third reading. This has already gone through committee. I must say—many of you in this room would not know this, but it was not a particularly effective committee session that we had with regard to Bill 105. We had no delegations speaking to this, which was somewhat disappointing and a little bit surprising.

Actually, the member from Nipissing—before I forget this point, he made mention that the Liberals were delaying it a bit. There were some games played, but actually, when the member from Nipissing came to the committee session, he was outraged that the committee was meeting on Monday; usually we would meet on a Thursday.

That outrage turned out somewhat misplaced, primarily because the House leaders—I guess the Conservative House leader—had pushed this forward. They wanted Bill 105 to come to the floor. They wanted this debate at the very end, and yet we've seen very little support for it, which is unfortunate, because there are good pieces in this bill.

I did actually want to speak to the bill, for a change. The bill says that currently there is an exemption for paying the employer health tax on the first \$400,000 on an employer's payroll. This applies to a business with one employee or to the Royal Bank of Canada. The NDP has long argued that, while the exemption is appropriate for small companies, there is no reason to have that first \$400,000 of a large employer's payroll exempted from the employer health tax. Therefore, one of our budget demands was to have companies with \$5 million in payroll or more no longer eligible for the exemption. This was partly included in the bill.

However, I do want to point out that the government half-listened to us on this. They said, “Okay, the big guys aren't going to get any more, and we're going to put the ceiling up to \$450,000 on the little guys.” I do think that the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton actually made a very good distinction. When people talk about small businesses and then medium-sized and large businesses, the lines were fairly blurred, as you could tell from the member from Nipissing's exchange. But they said, “No, we're going to put the ceiling up to \$450,000.” The net effect of that was that it was more or less revenue-neutral.

The suggestion that we made would have saved the treasury some \$90 million. We thought the \$90 million was far better spent on either paying down the deficit or on some social programs around housing or welfare costs or people in poverty or some other good purpose it might be used for. We hear the good causes each day during

question period, when we don't get any answers on these issues. There are developmentally challenged citizens in our community who don't have the resources they need; they certainly don't have housing or transitional supports. There are special education needs in our education system. This \$90 million, we thought, could be used to either pay down the deficit or address some much-needed investment in our communities.

To my friends from the Conservative Party who say this is primarily just our idea, really it isn't, because the bill that's before us is not the bill we proposed. Our bill would have been stronger. That said, when we did actually go out and consult on this, we heard from small businesses that they welcome any kind of support, because things are fairly dire. We are desperately trying to hold those businesses in our communities. We are also trying to demonstrate to them—because small and medium-sized businesses are the key drivers in the economy, so they do need some support.

Some of our concerns originally were that by increasing the amount of the exemption from \$400,000 to \$450,000, the new threshold doesn't raise any new revenue, so one would wonder, "Is it enough? Is that \$945 a year enough of a break for small businesses?" Again, those small business—the very small ones—welcome any relief. That said, there's still a lot of work before us as the Legislature.

The government must be sure it also has closed off all the possible ways of segmenting the workforce for payroll reporting purposes, which has been a problem in the past. This is definitely a concern going forward for us. We have seen some flaws in the thinking around implementation. We have seen some failed implementation strategies from this government on everything from full-day kindergarten to green energy to chemotherapy drugs in the health sector.

So we are going to be making sure, as this legislation moves forward—and it should come to a vote this Thursday; there's absolutely no reason for us not to get this done before the House rises. In a minority government, there's all the more reason to get things done and to show and demonstrate to the people of this province that we are actually serious about the economy and that we are serious about supporting small businesses, even if Bill 105 really could be called the Slightly Supporting Small Businesses Act.

I thought that was funny, but, apparently nobody is listening.

Mr. Michael Prue: I liked it.

Ms. Catherine Fife: A little bit of humour. Come on. It's a long afternoon.

We also use this opportunity to have a broader conversation and debate about taxation. There is a range of other tax loopholes that could be changed that we'll be pursuing.

The Liberals claim that the provincial government needs to hit household budgets with new taxes to raise \$34 billion for transit infrastructure by 2031—we have some serious concerns about that—yet at the same time,

the Liberal government has committed to a series of new corporate tax loopholes and giveaways to Ontario's largest corporations and highest income earners that will cost Ontario's treasury over \$35 billion by 2031. You can see where that money is coming from and where that money is needed. Just as an example, beginning in 2015, the government will open a \$1-billion corporate tax loophole that will give Ontario's largest corporations an HST rebate on expenses like high-priced restaurants and box seats. This is completely misplaced. It should not be a priority for this government. We've seen that corporate tax breaks do not generate jobs. They are an ineffective tool at creating confidence in the economy. Thus, we have a lot of corporations holding on to that money and not reinvesting it in expansion or even staying in the province.

1720

Another concern that we have around tax loopholes is, beginning in 2018, planned cuts in corporate tax rates from 11.5% to 10% will cost the treasury \$800 million per year—again, misplaced. Beginning in 2018, planned tax cuts only for individuals earning over \$500,000 per year, at a cost of \$470 million a year—and you will remember that this was one of the concessions that we negotiated in our first budget. When we came to this place, as a minority government, we decided to be respectful of the fact that the people of this province sent a minority government here to Queen's Park. We decided to try to put the priorities of people forward throughout the budget process. Certainly, in that round of budget, we were able to secure transition funding for child care and, obviously, the planned tax cut only for individuals earning over \$500,000. It's going to be reversed as of 2018—again, another loss of revenue for the province.

This is about finding some balance in the way that the province works with regard to taxation. We really do think that there is room for improvement, from a fiscally responsible perspective, to ensure that there is some corporate tax compliance, which obviously connects to Bill 105, in that we are making a slight change in the employer health tax.

Over the years, the Attorney General and Drummond—Mr. Drummond also made these recommendations—and other commentators have pointed to a number of problems with Ontario's tax collection system. The greatest challenge to the province relates to the ability of corporations to eliminate or decrease payment of provincial corporate income tax through creative mechanisms, including the shifting of profits and losses across Canada to avoid or reduce taxation in the province where income really was earned, which is where it is supposed to be taxed. We haven't seen the vigilance and the oversight that the Liberals have promised for a number of years in this regard. We haven't even seen them make a true commitment to controlling public sector CEO salaries or bonuses or perks or what have you. They missed an opportunity last week to support Andrea Horwath's private member's bill in this very regard and to demonstrate that they have a shared concern, as we do, in those

skyrocketing benefits and salaries of CEO public sector employees—and I tell you, the public at large has no patience for it whatsoever.

Moving on, just again on corporate tax compliance as it relates to Bill 105, currently corporate groups can use complex transactions to transfer losses among subsidiaries and across provincial borders. This should be a concern to all of us. These transactions can also be used by corporate groups to shift income from Ontario to lower-tax jurisdictions than Ontario, even though corporations benefit from public services in Ontario. There has to be some oversight in this regard. We are nickel-and-diming small and medium-sized businesses and families, and yet we're letting huge corporations not pay their fair share. This is not something that should be too onerous for FSCO or for the Minister of Finance to put in play. People just need to pay their fair share, especially when they are benefiting from the current infrastructure that this great province has to offer. We have noticed, over the years, that this government seems to be losing focus in this regard.

We've seen today, actually, this announcement that has come forward around capping CEO public sector salaries—that they're going to share it in the spring, and yet they make the announcement today, and certainly, earlier on, the media had some good questions about the timing of that. They are the government. They can introduce whatever they want, per se, today. If they really, truly cared about reining in public sector CEO salaries, they could do so today, just as they promised two years ago that they would do. With regard to future direction and the way that we are looking at the way that we generate revenue, certainly, small and medium-sized businesses in my riding are extremely concerned around the confidence of this place. By signalling to those people across the province that indeed the province is serious about reining in those costs, that would go a long way, I think, personally.

In the committee, it was also really interesting because the PCs introduced a number of amendments. Obviously, we're not going to support an increase to an \$800,000 exemption because we originally proposed \$400,000. So we didn't even think they would try to come to that committee with a rational or reasonable motion. And certainly, when they introduced the "robbing Peter to pay Paul," the new title of Bill 105—of course, they were ruled out of order because it was deemed making a mockery of the process.

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yes, I didn't even think there was a ruling that involved deeming an amendment a mockery to the parliamentary process. I can only assume that this is the same team, who came up with "robbing Peter to pay Paul," this title—it's the same creative writing team that has their leader and other members of their caucus get up and pretend that they are defenders of the middle class.

Certainly, when you dig deeper and read the white papers, their right-to-work—

Mr. Steve Clark: Discussion papers.

Ms. Catherine Fife:—discussion papers or conversation papers—another panel; I don't know. But their right-to-work direction that they hope to take this province—which is definitely an aggressive attack on the middle class if you do value the history of this province and you can acknowledge how much the labour movement has contributed to the economy and to those strong middle-class jobs which support the entire economy of this province. So it has never made sense to me that you attack the very people who are supporting and strengthening the economy.

Their right-to-work paper, for me, is just another reason to bring in their overall goals of lower wages, less-safe working conditions, no benefits and no pension. It is essentially a race to the bottom. In fact, actually, recently I had a member come into my office. She is one of those highly paid union workers. She makes \$36,000 a year; she works in the education sector. She said to me that she has a genuine fear of that direction. When members of the PC caucus get up and they talk about the great economy of Wisconsin, Michigan and Ohio—

Mr. Steve Clark: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Oh, good. I needed a break.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: I think the member for Kitchener–Waterloo is not speaking to Bill 105. She's rambling on about other matters.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would acknowledge the member's point of order. As I said with the previous speaker, I remind the member for Kitchener–Waterloo that her comments have to revert back to Bill 105.

The member for Kitchener–Waterloo has the floor.

Ms. Catherine Fife: So what she said actually was that she wants to invest. She wants to buy a house. She'd like to buy a car. She is genuinely concerned around the harshness, the aggressive talk again about the labour movement. I think those small and medium-sized businesses that will benefit, if not slightly—maybe not as much as we would want them to. They want that worker to go to their store and buy their products. They want the community at large to have enough disposable income to actually help them stay in business. It is a cycle. You cannot take these issues in isolation.

Of course, one of the reasons that we brought forward Bill 105 is to motivate this government to think more broadly about the values of small and medium-sized businesses and to make sure that we do give them some relief. Certainly, if they had followed more of our advice, the job creator tax credit, which has proven to be an effective tool, would have also made a lot of sense, especially for small and medium-sized businesses. When you reward the job creators, they pay it forward, and we've seen that time and time again.

1730

As I was listening to the member from Nipissing earlier in his Fedeli Focus on Finance, I was really thinking about—

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: There was a lot of talk about how you could use those acronyms.

But I'd just like to go back to Fife's finance facts: Corporate tax cuts have not created more jobs. The Liberals have tried again and again and again and cut, cut, cut corporate taxes. It has not worked, and you need a rethink on that, which is why we definitely want a refocused attention on the taxation system in the province of Ontario, and around compliance. I mean, there are literally billions of dollars to be found if this government did their job on oversight on compliance around taxation.

As I mentioned, the job creator tax credit does work and it should be used. We have seen companies go south of the border to be rewarded with a job creator tax credit. Small businesses are different than large businesses, and you have to acknowledge that as you look at the taxation model.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 105 has been through a long journey. This government has had since last spring to bring it forward. We're going to rush it through this week. But you know what? We have had extensive debate on it. We have certainly not held it back at all. We want to make sure that the people who have small and medium-sized businesses recognize that this place is actually doing something in their interest. Some of that committee talk may be inside baseball, but it just shows you that people in their respective parties need to refocus their attention back out to the rest of the province.

We, of course, are pleased to support it. We're going to make sure that it's held to account, that there is some transparency to it. We can only hope that, going forward, we can find some consensus on other ways to support small and medium-sized businesses. It's a full-time job getting the Liberal government to do what they said they were going to do in the first place, but we keep showing up to work and hoping for the best.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member for her comments. Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act, is a nice and good piece of legislation. Sixty thousand small businesses in Ontario will benefit and will have their taxes cut starting on January 1, 2014. We on this side of the House do share some concern that if things don't sort of settle down in the Legislature this week, this piece of legislation may not get passed and, as a result, those businesses would not see this tax reduction beginning only about two or three weeks from now.

I've been in the Legislature this afternoon for a little while and I've listened to some of the previous speakers, and I have heard, I think it's fair to say, an attempt to marginalize the legislation a little bit in some ways, to make it sound small, short and insignificant in terms of the impact it would have. Of course, as I've said before, this is not the only piece of legislation that our government has brought forward over the course of the last 10 years that has in a very significant way supported small businesses in the province of Ontario.

People have heard about the job numbers. We all know about the recession, but the reality is that not only

have we recovered all of the net jobs lost since the pre-recession peak, but we've actually increased them by about 200,000. Since coming to government in 2003, there are about 700,000 more jobs in Ontario than in 2003, and 70%-plus of those jobs are full-time jobs. Those are facts that nobody quibbles with in the Legislature. I've never heard anybody challenge those numbers.

The point is and the reason a lot of that has happened is that it is not just this piece of legislation that we've brought forward to help small businesses. There is the capital tax elimination that we brought in. There is the reduction of the small business tax rate, from 5.5% to 4.5% and I think down to 4%, if I'm not mistaken, significantly beyond the 20% tax reduction for small business; the corporate tax reductions; and the biggest single thing to help businesses in the history of the province of Ontario, the single tax rate, which the official opposition voted against, which we on our side of the House are still trying to figure out.

So this is one piece of a comprehensive suite of tax reduction measures that we've brought forward over the course of the last several years.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure to have a couple of minutes of questions and comments for the member from Kitchener—Waterloo on her speech. I know that some of our previous speakers today, especially our critic, the member for Nipissing, spoke about the small measure that the bill would provide small businesses. I believe he used the figure of \$75 a month that it would provide. You have to give credit where credit is due; it does provide a small break.

I think a lot of times we're not talking about the other consequence, and that's the exemption threshold for businesses with payrolls over \$5 million. The minute this bill gets royal assent, they're going to have a tax increase. I think the member for Nipissing called them out for who they are in our communities. They're the people who run our businesses like Canadian Tire, like our Independent Grocers in our community. Those are the people, I suggest, who are the job creators. I just went through a number of business-of-the-year awards through our local chambers of commerce, and those were the people who were creating jobs, who were expanding in the communities. And now, with royal assent, the tax hindrance that this will cause those businesses—again, I think that we're missing the boat.

Last week, I stood up for a small cheese maker and a pancake house in my riding that was being terrorized by MPAC. There was a newspaper story in my local daily newspaper about 730 Truck Stop, a business that supports about 100 jobs in Edwardsburgh/Cardinal township. The MOE had their application for expanding for eight months. They cashed the cheque back in August; they now tell me they're not going to get an answer until the spring. That's the type of impediment we need to cut, and we need to make sure that we stand up for local businesses in our communities and not beat them down, as this government has done time after time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's my pleasure to stand up here and give my comments on the member from the Kitchener–Waterloo, who described very well the committee process. That's something I think we forget when we're debating bills in the House. Absolutely, our voices are heard in the House and people are watching, but a lot of the times, constituents don't watch the committee channel. Oftentimes that's broadcast, and that's where the real work is done on bills.

It's disappointing to hear that during that committee process the Conservatives were playing games with regard to the bill. Just making the insinuation that you rob Peter to pay Paul—that's not what committee work is intended for. Committee work is intended to strengthen these bills and to give good, productive feedback so that when this bill comes back to the House, it's the best that it can be. Then we can debate it further, and then hopefully that streamlines the process so that we can vote on this bill and make small business thrive a little better.

Though this is a small bill, it is going to help small business. It does give them that employer health tax, so I'm glad that the committee work was done on it. I'm glad it's back here for third reading, but I don't think delaying the bill is really in anybody's interest, since it is going to help small business in our communities. We all know, as we've said many times before—many members—that small businesses are our driver of jobs in our neighbourhoods, so we need to make sure we do support the bill. This is a small step forward, Speaker, into doing that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Scarborough–Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise in support of Bill 105. Mr. Speaker, we heard from my colleagues from Thunder Bay–Atikokan and London–Fanshawe. Both talked about the importance of passing this bill before we recess for the holiday.

Most of us in this chamber also recently, on November 30, supported what we call “Shop the Neighbourhood.” So if those of us stood up and supported shopping locally—this is what this bill is all about, Mr. Speaker. At the end of the day, this bill, if passed, would enable small businesses an opportunity not to be paying the employer health tax.

More importantly, if we do support local businesses, we are also supporting our neighbours. Many of us have these local neighbours owning local businesses, and through this bill we're providing an opportunity to make sure that small business continues to thrive and prosper.

1740

I'm encouraging members from all three parties to move this bill forward because it already passed second reading. It's gone through the committee's clause-by-clause. I keep hearing today that people want to amend certain clauses of the bill. Well, that's just really funny, because we've already done that through the committee. Why are we having criticism of the bill when we already went through committee?

Before I conclude my remarks, I want to encourage each one of us to do the right thing for every small business in Ontario because this bill is the right thing for all of us to support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's it for questions and comments. We return to the member from Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you to the members from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, Leeds–Grenville, London–Fanshawe and Scarborough–Agincourt.

I think we need just a few facts on this because there's some rhetoric around what this actually will accomplish. There is an employer health tax exemption on the first \$450,000 of payroll, which applies to all employers, large or small. Employers pay the employer health tax as a percentage of the payroll. While this exemption is arguably legitimate for small businesses, it makes no sense to exempt larger employers with thousands of employees, like banks and large corporations, from paying the tax on their first \$450,000 in payroll, and the new payroll exemption threshold will be set at \$5 million. With that threshold level, you're likely looking at continuing the exemption for all employers with 100 or fewer employees.

This will benefit small businesses—60,000. We do need to signal that we are supportive of those small and medium-sized enterprises, and we do need to get this passed before the House rises.

Certainly the amendments that came through committee, I absolutely agree with the member from London–Fanshawe that they were not helpful amendments. There was no true effort on the part of the PC caucus to effectively change or improve this piece of legislation. Just like the two budgets before them, they essentially just sat on the sidelines and made jokes about changing the title, “robbing Peter to pay Paul,” written primarily by their creative writing team, the same team that says it supports the middle class when they do not.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: One problem we see with Bill 105 is that this government seems unwilling to take this far enough. They're unwilling to really take any decisive action with respect to tax relief, not only for Ontario businesses but for customers of those businesses and communities that those businesses operate in.

What we see in this legislation, if anything, is a bit of tinkering with tax rates and exemptions, but it's not going far enough to solve what I consider not only an economic crisis but also a jobs crisis and the attendant deficit and debt crises. Ontario's economy is in trouble and this government's budget is in trouble. We've got well over 600,000 people unemployed. We've heard this time and time again in this Legislature. So many others have given up looking for work, and so many others are presently on the Ontario Works program. So it's going to take some very bold action to get people back to work because we're losing so many businesses in the province of Ontario.

The bad news continues. This is an issue that affects not only my riding but the member for Oxford and the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London. This is news that came out in the media today. Trillium Railway, which is also known as the St. Thomas and Eastern Railway, will cease operations December 20. This hits our local area very hard. It reverts back to CN Rail. Trillium clients—and again, there's quite a list of industry and businesses here. I mentioned this earlier in this House. Clients of the railway include Cargill AgHorizons and Norfolk FS. They're both located in Courtland. The Growmark fertilizer plant of Delhi is also in my riding. The ethanol plant in Aylmer—this is of concern, obviously, for our member from Elgin–Middlesex–London. Integrated Grain Processors Co-operative's ethanol plant set up not that long ago actually, Speaker, and again, an industry dependent on this rail line.

The member for Oxford has been informed about what's happened in his town of Tillsonburg. I'm the former MPP for Tillsonburg and certainly maintain an interest in that particular town. Tillsonburg businesses affected: no more rail service for Johnson Controls, Wellmaster Pipe and Supply, Kissner Group, International Beams and Future Transfer Company.

Again, my question to this government, to this Minister of Transportation, most specifically—we need advice. We are asking for any options that are available, most particularly, any action taken by this government to maintain this short-line railway. It reverts back, as I mentioned, to the CN Rail line now. It runs from St. Thomas to Delhi. It's known as Trillium Railway; that's the St. Thomas and Eastern Railway. There are problems with the railway trestles.

We hear so much about government grants from the other side. No money is forthcoming that I'm aware of. In fact, the owner of the short-line railway had requested assistance to actually raise the capacity of the main line to 283,000 pounds, again, to allow expansion for those industries, that list of businesses that I just walked through.

Agriculture and agribusiness, as represented by the ethanol plant and these fertilizer plants down our way, is key to our local economy. It was an economy actually once anchored by tobacco. Regrettably, Dalton McGuinty destroyed our tobacco economy. We have seen the destruction of our cucumber economy and everything that goes with that. The farm labour, the fellows who come up from Jamaica and from Mexico, as well as the German Mexican Mennonites: They're now out of jobs with the demise of the Smucker's Bick's plants located in Dunnville, and also the Delhi tank farm, the brine farm.

We're not growing pears or peaches anymore in Norfolk; we've lost CanGro down in Niagara. Just a week ago, the announcement that Georgia Pacific—this is the gypsum mine in Caledonia. Not many people realize that mines exist in southern Ontario. Both Caledonia and Hagersville are mining towns. At Georgia Pacific, 67 employees have been idled. We don't know if and when that company is going to come back.

We have a situation, Speaker: Despite prolonged unemployment, the loss of companies—even with that—this province uncannily, oddly, faces a skilled-labour shortage, and some of these ineffective economic development programs we hear so much about are not helping any of these industries. They're certainly not going to help those industries that found out this weekend that they have lost their railway. You really don't see any concrete evidence from these economic development programs. You really don't see any results. You get the odd announcement from the other side.

We've also got to take a look at non-productive corporate welfare as well.

It doesn't end there, Speaker. More troubling trends over the past decade: Ontario has experienced a net loss of leading global companies. I mentioned Smucker's; I mentioned Georgia Pacific, just in my riding alone. I think, obviously, of GM Diesel in London, the electro-motive plant. That's the one that went to Muncie, Indiana.

Yes, Indiana is a right-to-work state. The question out there now is, how many other companies are moving to states like Indiana or to Michigan, also a right-to-work state? Very clearly, Ontario is in trouble. The economy is in trouble. Their budget is in trouble.

1750

It took over 60 years for Detroit to lose 270,000 manufacturing jobs. Ontario has just lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs in the last 10 years. As with the devastation in the bankrupt city of Detroit, those lost factory jobs aren't coming back. We've got to work very hard—we have to go beyond Bill 105—to create 300,000 new jobs to replace those that are lost in the factories. What has this government done? They've put 300,000 extra people on the provincial government payroll.

So closed plants, lost jobs, families struggling to survive—it's an inevitable outcome of a number of factors not addressed by Bill 105—runaway power costs, out-of-touch labour legislation, over-regulation and a failure of government to understand what entrepreneurs need to succeed. In the last few years, Ontario has truly lost its way. We've become a province of smaller dreams, bigger government—obviously; our economy is limping along, and government spending is racing ahead.

It's been 10 years. We're experiencing what I consider an extraordinary economic decline. The facts speak for themselves: 600,000 people are out of work, rapidly escalating energy costs, historic deficits, a doubling of the provincial debt. I know down my way, Mr. McGuinty is known as Dalton the Debt-Doubler, and he comes by that reputation honestly. You double a provincial debt, it stifles job creation, puts a burden on future generations and it subtracts money away from investing in infrastructure, whether it be subways or roads or bridges or railway trestles. You subtract that money from infrastructure, and, again, it raises some other questions that I have for this government.

We have a situation in Caledonia. It really doesn't matter which way you go from my riding—to get to

Toronto, for example—you've got to cross the Grand River. In the vicinity of Caledonia, in Haldimand county, there's a big question mark out there. We have one bypass bridge used by trucks; it's not used by townspeople. We have a very old, very beautiful, beautiful bridge. It's really the trademark of Caledonia. It has been neglected for the last 10 years. There's a call for another bridge downstream. We have to find out from this government what the status of bridge maintenance is, of perhaps future bridge construction in Caledonia. Hagersville, just down the highway on number 6, is a trucking town. It's in Haldimand county. All the trucks go through the centre of town; they go down the main street. Again, the question remains, the outstanding question: Does this government have a plan to build a bypass around Hagersville? Do they have any money left? This is the concern.

It has been 74 consecutive months now that this province has had a higher unemployment rate than the national average. Again, I'm not sure if Bill 105 is going to help in this regard. Our credit rating has been downgraded. Will legislation that takes away that tax exemption from family-owned businesses help with our credit rating? Once-mighty Ontario is now considered a have-not province; it receives equalization payments from the federal government, as we all know. Again, we're experiencing a net loss of not only small business, not only the medium-sized family business; we're losing leading global companies. I mention Georgia-Pacific, right in my riding, right in the mining town of Caledonia; John Deere, one of the largest farm equipment companies in the world; the Heinz corporation; Hershey's; Siemens; Caterpillar—global companies—once with plants in Ontario and, in recent years, they've gone overseas or more particularly, gone to states like Indiana and Ohio, and, I expect in the future, on the way to Michigan.

We can't afford that. We can't afford a future where the money that's desperately needed to invest in infrastructure, productivity and in job creation is being directed to pay for electricity bills, to pay for high energy bills.

A lot of good jobs are going unfilled. We still have these outdated apprenticeship rules, in contrast to other provinces across the Dominion of Canada.

The current tax system, again, which we're debating this afternoon in Bill 105, is complex. It consists of arbitrary rules, and it seems designed—certainly with respect to the business taxes we're talking about today—to discourage any effort towards enhancing productivity. There's really no encouragement to invest in a higher rate of productivity. We're obviously losing that battle, in particular with the United States. Manufacturing is coming back in the United States.

It's not only tax policy, as we discussed this afternoon. There are a number of broad areas to address. It's not only business taxes. We have to address income taxes. We have to address consumption taxes, the HST. We have to deal with outdated labour legislation. We have to deal with the rising cost of energy. We have to deal with

the plethora of rules and regulations and forms to fill out, the bureaucratic red tape that not only suffocates business; it takes the fun out of doing business. It takes the fun out of running a farm.

Government regulations have become the growth industry now, and it's one that almost seems designed to create jobs for bureaucrats—300,000 new government jobs, 300,000 people added to the government payroll. At the same time, we witnessed the loss of 300,000 well-paying, by and large unionized, factory jobs, jobs where you make the big money and you're not doing it on the taxpayer's dime.

Why do we see 300,000 new government jobs if we don't see the private sector jobs? There's a serious problem here. Not everybody can work for the government. In fact, 80% of the people in Ontario don't; eight out of 10 jobs are found within the private sector. Granted, unionized or non-unionized, they make considerably less money than a government job when you look at total compensation. In fact, if you look at wages, salaries, pensions, perks, gym memberships, early retirement and levels of absenteeism, it's a much better run if you've got a government job, by about 30%. I think we need something in this Legislature to deal with this unfairness. We hear other parties talk about pay equity. Where's the pay equity between private sector jobs and public sector jobs?

Better roads, better rail, rapid transit: They're all required in the GTA, Hamilton and across the province of Ontario. As I mentioned, we're losing a railway in Norfolk and Elgin and Oxford. Hagersville is a trucking town; all the trucks have to go down the main street of town for lack of a bypass.

There are actually barriers to trade that continue within this province. We stand out as far as looking at the rest of the country. Every province, for example, seems to have their own rules and regulations for trucking. I know that the western provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan, for example, are harmonizing these rules and streamlining them. It's something we have to take a look at as well.

We really shouldn't have to be debating—it's almost like we're debating whether we're going to have a manufacturing sector or not, whether we're going to have agribusiness, whether we're going to have mining or forestry. We must have this primary industry. We need petrochemical. We cannot lose our steel industry.

We've lost our coal-generated electricity generating industry. That's primary industry. I'm very proud of the fact that for the last 40 years, the Nanticoke generating station, the largest coal-fired generating station in North America, operated in my riding. Our government cleaned it up. We put in the selective catalytic reduction units. We used low-sulphur coal. Lambton put on the scrubbers to take out the scrubber, and also put SCR's on their units.

This government came in. In 10 years, not one move—not an inch—towards cleaning up the coal plants that were providing very inexpensive electricity in the province of Ontario. When this government was elected,

the price of electricity for the consumer was 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour. Coal was producing it for about two or three cents a kilowatt hour.

We need jobs; we need real jobs. Granted, we know about the 300,000 government jobs. We have to create that demand for additional real jobs.

This legislation is a bit of a baby step, a bit of tinkering around a tax exemption for small business. If you're running a small business with that kind of tax exemption, there's a temptation to remain as a small business, because if you go to a payroll of over \$5 million, you lose that exemption. This is an unintended consequence of a piece of legislation like Bill 105 that clearly hasn't been thought out.

Under Bill 105, very simply, it means that Ontario businesses, the family-owned businesses that our finance critic was talking about recently, those with \$5 million or more in payroll, will no longer—

Mr. Phil McNeely: A point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): A point of order: The member for Ottawa—Orléans.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Mr. Speaker, I think we should be following the discussion on what we're supposed to be on, this bill. The coal discussion didn't seem to me to be pertinent, that they want to bring back coal.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): To be relevant, the debate has to be respectful to the bill that we're debating. We are debating Bill 105 and I heard the member for Haldimand—Norfolk mention Bill 105 just before he was interrupted.

I return to the member for Haldimand—Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Yes, I'll just finish that sentence: Bill 105 means that Ontario businesses with \$5 million or more in payroll—it was about here that I got interrupted. There was a bit of a time delay there; we see this on satellite images coming from other countries. But anyway, Bill 105 means that Ontario businesses with \$5 million or more in payroll will no longer be able to claim a tax exemption on the first \$400,000 of their payroll, thus increasing taxes on family-owned businesses.

We have to get manufacturing back on its feet, Speaker. We've got to bring back mining; we've got to bring back forestry. We're heading in the right direction here, but to tinker around with something that is relatively insignificant as far as the big picture I just find kind of regrettable, Speaker.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1803.

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Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brook	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	Niagara Falls	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉES PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Laura Albanese, Steve Clark
Mike Colle, Joe Dickson
Rob Leone, Amrit Mangat
Taras Natyshak, Jerry J. Ouellette
Michael Prue
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs / Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Soo Wong
Steven Del Duca, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Douglas C. Holyday, Mitzie Hunter
Monte McNaughton, Michael Prue
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Donna H. Cansfield
Sarah Campbell, Donna H. Cansfield
Grant Crack, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Michael Harris
Peggy Sattler, Laurie Scott
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Rick Bartolucci
Laura Albanese, Rick Bartolucci
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Percy Hatfield
Mitzie Hunter, Jim McDonell
Randy Pettapiece, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Phil McNeely
Teresa J. Armstrong, Steven Del Duca
Bob Delaney, Frank Klees
Jack MacLaren, Phil McNeely
Rob E. Milligan, Shafiq Qadri
Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bas Balkissoon, Grant Crack
Vic Dhillon, Garfield Dunlop
Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Norm Miller
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, Lorenzo Berardinetti
France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Bill Mauro, Phil McNeely
Norm Miller, John O'Toole
Jagmeet Singh
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
Donna H. Cansfield, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Monte Kwinter
Jane McKenna, Rick Nicholls
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Bas Balkissoon, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Ernie Hardeman
Rod Jackson, Helena Jaczek
Paul Miller
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Select Committee on Developmental Services / Comité spécial sur les services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle

Chair / Présidente: Laura Albanese
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson
Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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